THE
GREAT DAYS OF VERSAILLES

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Emery Walker Ph. Sc.

Louis XIV

From a painting by Rigaud

THE GREAT DAYS OF VERSAILLES

STUDIES FROM COURT LIFE IN THE LATER YEARS OF LOUIS XIV

by
G. F. BRADBY

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PREFACE

THE following pages do not profess to be history; still less do they pretend to throw any new light upon a period which is already so exhaustively known through its memoirs and its letters. All that I have attempted to do is to reconstruct from familiar materials a picture of Court life at Versailles in the later years of Louis XIV—the manners, customs, and interests of a unique society which has no counterpart in modern Europe—and to give a brief account of the private life and character of some of the people who figured most prominently in the events of the time. My hope is that such a compilation may be of use to those who intend to study the French eighteenth-century memoirs, by making them familiar with some of the personal questions which counted for so much at the French Court; and, also, that it may be not without interest for that large class of people who have neither time nor opportunity to study the period in detail, and who are forced to be content with the summaries of others.

Such a work as I have contemplated is almost necessarily based on Saint-Simon; but no writer needs to be read in a more critical spirit than Saint-Simon. Not only is he inclined to colour his canvas with a wealth

of picturesque detail which is often more dramatically appropriate than historically true, but, also, he is not always careful to distinguish between what he knew and what he only surmised. Moreover, he writes with a strong personal and political bias, and, with all his acumen, he could never see life except through the eyes of a privileged caste. For him, the welfare of France was bound up with the maintenance of the ducal prerogatives; and to assert the privileges of his order was the most sacred of the duties that he imposed on himself. Sympathy with his aims covered a multitude of sins; open antagonism was the unpardonable offence, and connoted a number of other undesirable qualities which set his pen 'dipping for the hottest ink.' To the Duc du Maine he is manifestly and flagrantly unjust; Madame de Maintenon, whom he did not know personally, becomes in his excited imagination the incarnation of all that is most unlovely in human nature; and he will not allow that Vendôme possessed a single military talent or won a solitary victory on his own initiative.

Fortunately, we do not depend on Saint-Simon alone for our knowledge of the secret history of the times; the memoirs of Dangeau, the Grande Mademoiselle, Madame de Caylus, Madame de Staal, and, above all, the letters of Madame de Maintenon, provide a useful and necessary corrective to the animus of his brilliant pages. Madame, the Princess Palatine, who poured out her soul in voluminous letters, is a storehouse of information; but she was as good a hater as Saint-Simon, and, when she is criticising individuals, her judgments need to be taken

with as many grains of salt as those of the great memoir-writer himself.

Besides drawing freely from the above-mentioned sources I have pillaged Arvède Barine's 'Louis XIV et la Grande Mademoiselle,' Pierre de Nolhac's works on Versailles, and Druon's 'Histoire de l'Éducation des Princes dans la Maison des Bourbons de France'—one of the most interesting and suggestive works on education extant; and, while I am acknowledging my obligations, I should like to add that I am indebted to my friend Mr. C. P. Hastings for much valuable advice and criticism, and to Mr. H. Chitty and Miss E. D. Bradby for help in seeing the volume through the press.

Nobody is more conscious than myself of its shortcomings, but for two of the most obvious I should like to plead extenuating circumstances. In the first place, I know that I have been guilty, more than once, of 'vain repetition.' The plan I have adopted of treating my principal characters in separate compartments made a certain amount of overlapping almost inevitable; and, on the whole, I have thought it better to lay myself open to the charge of being redundant than to risk being obscure. In the second place, when quoting Saint-Simon at any length, I have ventured to paraphrase rather than translate. I feel the enormity of the crime: but few writers lose so much by translation as Saint-Simon. His rapid fire of words, his carelessness of construction, and his habit of producing a cumulative impression by piling phrase on phrase, are singularly effective in the French, but do not lend themselves to our English idiom; and

any attempt to reproduce the originality and vigour of his style is certain to fail of its object, unless it is undertaken by an abler pen than mine.

For the inaccuracies which, I feel sure, will have crept into these pages, as well as for a habit of dogmatising on insufficient data, I must throw myself on the indulgence of the reader, with the frank admission that the latter of the two faults, at all events, is almost inseparable from the pedagogue.

G. F. B.

Rugby.

CONTENTS

CHAPTER		PAGE
I.	Versailles	1
II.	Life at Court	27
III.	Manners and Customs	58
IV.	Some Celebrities at the Court	89
V.	Louis XIV	126
VI.	Louis XIV (*continued*)	158
VII.	Mme. de Maintenon	193
VIII.	Monsieur	234
IX.	Madame	252
X.	Monseigneur, the Grand Dauphin	291
XI.	The Duke and Duchess of Burgundy	317
XII.	Duc d'Anjou and Duc de Berry	357
	Genealogical Tables	371
	Index	377

PRELIMINARY

In speaking of members of the royal family I have used the nomenclature of the time; as it is apt to be puzzling, the reader will do well to bear in mind that:—

THE QUEEN MOTHER = Anne of Austria, widow of Louis XIII; *d.* 1666.

THE QUEEN = Marie-Thérèse, daughter of Philip IV of Spain; *d.* 1683.

MONSEIGNEUR or the GRAND DAUPHIN = Louis, eldest and only surviving (legitimate) son of Louis XIV; *d.* 1711.

The DUC DE BOURGOGNE = the eldest son of Monseigneur: became Dauphin in 1711; *d.* 1712.

MONSIEUR = Philippe Duc d'Orléans, only brother of Louis XIV; *d.* 1701.

MADAME or the PRINCESS PALATINE = the second wife of the above, daughter of the Elector Palatine and great-grand-daughter of James I of England; *d.* 1722.

The DUC DE CHARTRES or the DUC D'ORLÉANS = the only surviving son of the above: became Regent in 1715; *d.* 1723.

THE DUCHESSE DE CHARTRES or D'ORLÉANS = his wife, *née* Mlle. de Blois, youngest daughter of Louis XIV and Madame de Montespan; *d.* 1749.

M. LE PRINCE = Henri Jules de Bourbon-Condé, son of the great Condé, and senior Prince of the Blood; *d.* 1709.

M. LE DUC = the son of M. le Prince; *d.* 1710.

MADAME LA DUCHESSE = the wife of M. le Duc, *née* Mlle. de Nantes, daughter of Louis XIV and Madame de Montespan; *d.* 1743.

THE PRINCESSE DE CONTI (*née* Mlle. de Blois, a daughter of Louis XIV and Mlle. de la Vallière) = the widow of Louis Armand de Conti (*d.* 1685), nephew of the Grand Condé; *d.* 1739.

THE PRINCE DE CONTI = the brother of Louis Armand: he married a daughter of M. le Prince; *d.* 1709.

Genealogical tables will be found at the end of the book.

THE

GREAT DAYS OF VERSAILLES

CHAPTER I

VERSAILLES

Versailles—Its origin—Its splendour—Trianon—Marly—Fontainebleau—The Suisses—The servants—Premiers valets de chambre—Bontemps.

If, in the end, Versailles charms by the grace and delicacy of its detail, its first effect is to stun by the vastness of its proportions. The stupendous pile that faces the empty wilderness of the Place d'Armes, with its vista of diminishing courts and its two wings that stretch right and left into infinity, is more reminiscent of the great works of Egyptian kings than any other palace in Europe. Indeed, the spirit that underlies it has much in common with the spirit of the Pharaohs. There is the same reckless squandering of the resources of a nation, the same prodigality of labour, the same defiance of nature and contempt for difficulty. A city where there had been a few poor houses, a palace that surpassed in splendour the glories of the Louvre and Fontainebleau, an unrivalled network of fountains on a plain devoid of running water, something vast where nature seemed to have put her veto on the works of man—that was the achievement which Louis XIV wrung from an exhausted France.

But Versailles is not only vast; it is beautiful. For

nearly a century the best talent in France was employed on its decoration. Architects, sculptors, painters, goldsmiths, founders, and landscape gardeners, made and remade, till the palace became the great storehouse of the artistic genius of the period. Perhaps the art is not the highest art; perhaps one storey of the Giotto Tower is worth all the mass of marble and stone and brick which are piled together at Versailles; one corner of an English copse in Spring more beautiful than the acres of formal garden, with their artificial *bosquets*, their nymphs, and statues, and fountains. Still the place has a charm and a character of its own. And if the eye grows weary of straight lines and interminable vistas, if the mind cloys at the endless repetition of classical myth degraded to do honour to a man who was only second rate, there is a purpose and a dignity in the very monotony of line, a grace and a gaiety in the modelling of the individual figures, which are very pleasing and very French. Above all there is a unity of purpose and design, which, as the eye grows accustomed to the unusual scale of its surroundings, becomes increasingly impressive. Whatever are the faults of Versailles, its creators knew what effect they intended to produce; and they produced it with an ease and a certainty that astonish.

And the architecture and architectural landscape that dominate everything were truly representative of the character of the people who created them. It says much for the artistic capacity of a nation when it can translate itself into brick and mortar; when it feels the necessity of harmonising its external surroundings with its internal modes of thought. If you wish for a contrast, walk through any of the modernised thoroughfares of London, with their eclectic jumble of Byzantine, Gothic, and Renaissance, their eternal and fruitless striving after something that shall satisfy. Every street is a museum

of wasted energy and ineffectual effort at expression. Now Versailles, whatever its architectural faults, does at least satisfy, because it is an adequate expression of the *ancien régime*. If there is a monotonous uniformity about its outlines, a certain pomposity about its scheme of decoration, there was monotony and pomposity too in the life that was lived there, where the daily routine was a long parade and the most trivial act of the sovereign a ceremony: if the landscape is formal and artificial, so were the modes of thought of those who took their pleasure in its stately gardens, and who yet combined with their formality a certain vivacity and impetuous gaiety that speak in the detail of frieze, and cornice, and pillar, in the bronze groups of laughing children, and in the dainty pastorals of Watteau, and Mignard, and Lancret.

But it is neither to its vastness nor to its art treasures that Versailles owes its unique attraction, but to this fact, that it stands for one complete epoch of history and for nothing else. The curse of most historical buildings is that they contain too much of history: the mind wanders restlessly from century to century, and finds no central and solid halting-place. In the Tower of London it is bewildered by successive images of Norman, Plantagenet, and Tudor; in the Forum the Empire struggles for the mastery with the Republic, and the Renaissance impinges upon both; even on the Acropolis, Rome and Venice and Turkey do something to blur the memory of Pericles. But Versailles has been stranded high and dry. It came into history through a whim of Louis XIV, and history may almost be said to have left it on that October afternoon in 1789 when Lous XVI drove for the last time through its iron gate, a prisoner of the Paris mob.

Thus there is nothing to distract the mind from the period of which it is the symbol and the expression: it

stands there a complete whole. And yet not quite complete; for, to be entirely itself, Versailles needs the gaily coloured groups of *seigneurs* and *grandes dames* on its broad terraces and down its long perspectives; the bustle of carriages and footmen and lackeys in its silent courts; the roll of the Swiss drums or the distant tinkle of a lute; even the motley throng of hawkers and fruit-sellers who crowded the approaches and sometimes penetrated on to the stairs. Without these Versailles has something of the appearance of a great and melancholy ghost.

Yet nowhere is it more easy to reconstruct the past. It needs no great effort of the imagination to re-people the empty halls and corridors with the living forms of the men and women who still look down on their old haunts from the pictures on the walls. Here it is the stately figure of the *Grand Monarque* himself, moving majestically through the *grands appartements* on his way to the chapel, with the famous red-heeled shoes that added artificially to his height, and the air of almost overpowering dignity which, in spite of its somewhat theatrical pose, impressed friends and foes alike. Or in his later years we see him wheeled about the gardens in his bath-chair, while the Duchess of Burgundy, the life and darling of the Court, hovers round him and coaxes the hard mouth into a smile. In yonder suite of rooms that open on to the 'Queen's Staircase,' while the king transacts State business with Chamillart, Madame de Maintenon is still seated at her embroidery before the fire, her heavy, almost sullen face ostentatiously fixed upon her work, while her thoughts are far away at Saint-Cyr. Or it is Monseigneur, the Grand Dauphin, who walks nonchalantly through the Œil-de-Bœuf, a superb lay figure, with his handsome empty face, his great blonde wig and blue eyes, and his thoughts that revolve round the table, the chase and the weather. And in these

gloomy little rooms, which look out upon a small and sunless court—rooms where in after years poor Marie Leczinska will try to forget her sorrows, and Marie Antoinette will take refuge from the vexatious etiquette of a censorious Court—the Duke of Burgundy is seated, deep in prayer or study, preparing himself for the task which Providence seemed to have assigned him—the great but difficult task of healing the wounds of France. And everywhere, in the state-rooms and the galleries, on the terraces and in the gardens, there is a steady stream of courtiers and court functionaries, princes and princesses of the blood, dukes and marquises, bishops and abbés, ladies of the palace and maids of honour—all the people whom Saint-Simon and the Memoirs of the eighteenth century have made real to us as no other characters in history are real, with their heroisms and their petty intrigues, their shining virtues and their dark vices, their strange blending of wit and ignorance, taste and vulgarity, and their curious capacity for living ten thousand miles away from facts and yet remaining intensely human.

It is a strangely fascinating world; a world that is widely different from our own and yet startles every now and again by its resemblance; a world of reckless extravagance and false ideals. It was the outcome of peculiar circumstances which, one hopes, can never be repeated; but it contains a great warning and is worth a study. And if, in its annals, there are pages that disgust, the disgust is always redeemed by terror; because each act of folly and lust is an essential part of a fearful tragedy, and one always hears behind it the rattle of the tumbrils and the roar of the Paris mob. For here, as nowhere else in history, a great drama was played out to the bitter end. Every sin was allowed to work out its logical consequences. And, though there were some good men and

many clever ones amongst those who helped to shape the destinies of the age, there was no one wise enough or strong enough to stem the current and avert the impending cataclysm. From its first inception Versailles had been a challenge to nature, and the system, of which it was the citadel, a defiance of the laws that govern human life. It stands to-day a silent witness to the futility of all effort that works not with but against nature; and the flag that floats above it records the vengeance, ruthless and indiscriminate, but sure, which, in the end, overtakes all authority and power that waste themselves on selfish aims and dare not face realities.

But if the men and women who laughed through the earlier scenes of the tragedy were often shallow and generally blind, they were very witty and attractive. There was a sparkle and individuality in their talk, a natural ease and gaiety about their bearing, which win our sympathy even while we condemn. Their keen intelligent faces watch us still from a hundred portraits. Some charm with a dainty prettiness, others are ugly, but with an ugliness that is generally distinguished: nearly all impress with a sense of character, and not even the most idealised are insipid. And we know so much about them; their ambitions and disappointments, their intrigues and their pleasures, what they made of life and how they faced death. If, by a miracle, we could step back into the past and find ourselves amongst them in the flesh, we should hardly feel like strangers. Dangeau at least we should recognise, with his flowing wig and pompous features, trying to look like Louis XIV; and Turenne with the serious melancholy face and the inscrutable eyes; and Louvois with the masterful, almost truculent, air; and solid florid Le Nôtre, the genius of the gardens; and the half sad, half humorous smile of Fénelon. And they, if they could step down from their frames, would not find

themselves in an unrecognisable world. Changes, no doubt, they would notice in plenty; marble replaced by carved wood-panelling; the rooms and galleries emptied of their costly furniture; and, in the gardens, the long avenues of clipped hornbeams and yews superseded by elms and limes, less familiar than their predecessors with the remorseless pruning hook. But the changes are only changes of detail; and from the windows of the *Galerie des Glaces*, where they so often stood and gossiped, they would see the same broad terrace with the same statues and fountains and boxwood borders; and beyond it the familiar vista past the fountain of Latona, the *tapis vert*, the *bassin d'Apollon*, and the canal with its fleet of small boats; and so away to the Porte de Maintenon and the horizon where the Forest of Marly breaks the skyline and still recalls those exploits of the chase which were to all a welcome recreation, and to some the most serious occupation of their lives.

Versailles, indeed, began as a hunting-lodge of Louis XIII, who built, on a bit of rising ground that sloped up from the adjacent swamps and forest, what Saint-Simon picturesquely calls a '*petit château de cartes*.' Here he was wont to come from time to time with a few chosen friends to spend the night roughly and without ceremony. Here too Louis XIV hunted as a boy. The surroundings were not generally considered attractive, and the climate, owing to the prevalence of marshland, was unhealthy. Even at the present day, though the land has long been drained and planted, the air is often heavy and relaxing. But for some reason or other, the place acquired for the young king pleasant associations, and, in 1662, he decided to make of it a country residence, to which he could pay short visits with his queen and the favourites of the Court. Alterations were made, chiefly in the gardens; but the Château also was partially reconstructed, and, in

1664, enough money was being spent on it to alarm the thrifty Colbert. He ventured to remonstrate with the king, to disparage the charms of Versailles, and to urge that, if money was to be expended, the completion of the Louvre would be a more worthy and enduring monument of a great king. Louis listened to him graciously; did something for the Louvre, but continued to spend on Versailles. Creation is more fascinating than completion, and the very difficulty of the task appealed to him; for Versailles had no natural advantages. A sandy soil and a complete absence of running water made the gardens a formidable problem. But Louis enjoyed such problems, and their successful solution seemed a striking, if expensive, way of triumphing over nature. The gardens grew as if by magic; *bosquets* were transplanted bodily from the forest of Compiègne, gods and goddesses in stone were called in to people the long avenues, and fountains began to plash on the terrace. Louis took a pride in his achievement; the royal visits became more and more frequent, the *fêtes* increasingly splendid. In 1668, after a week of festivities, given, nominally, in honour of the queen, but really to please his beautiful mistress, Mme. de Montespan, Louis decided to begin everything afresh, and to make Versailles a palace worthy of the greatest monarch in Europe. But here a difficulty arose. Le Vau, the architect, insisted that the little two-storeyed lodge of Louis XIII should come down; the King was equally determined that it should stand; it might be raised by a storey and the façade might be embellished, but the original structure must not be removed. The exact motive of this piece of conservatism is not clear; but, whether it were filial piety or merely a royal whim, the result was the same. The king had to be obeyed, but the architect won him to a compromise. The *château de cartes* was enveloped from behind but allowed to give

the keynote to the arrangement of the front, with the result that Versailles presents two entirely different styles and aspects according as it is viewed from the east or from the west side. On the east, or Paris side, there are the red and white brick, the steep slate-roofing, and the picturesque variety, of a French seventeenth-century château. On the west, or garden side, one is confronted by the unbroken uniformity of Roman Renaissance —an impressive but rather monotonous mass of white stone, imperfectly relieved by the niched statues of the walls and the trophies which, with the exception of the chapel, alone break the long straight skyline. In the glare of a summer noon there is something overpowering in this huge west front, with its rows of dazzling windows and its ponderous size; but by moonlight, or in the gathering shadows of evening, its effect is mysterious and almost fairy-like—you would say a palace of ice or snow.

The building was hardly completed when Louis' head was already full of new schemes involving still more drastic changes. His plan was nothing less than to move the seat of government bodily from Paris to Versailles, and to make of the latter place a palace, almost a city, in which he could house his court, his ministers, and all the army of officials and dependents who were attached to the royal service. Versailles was to become the centre of France, and, through France, of Europe; and the waste land that formed the approach to the palace, and which was only occupied by a few poor inns or cottages, was to be the site of a new town, where the noblest families were to build their private houses on fixed and uniform patterns: for, like all monarchs who think imperially, Louis had a passion for uniformity.

The motive of this momentous change is to be found in the king's dislike of Paris. The mocking and irreverent

spirit of the Parisians was not calculated to appeal to a man who hated to have his actions criticised or his person held up to ridicule. Moreover, Paris was associated with certain early humiliations, which, at the zenith of his splendour, he was anxious to forget. At Versailles he was safe from the memory of failure as well as from the frank wit and the searching gaze of the mob, but near enough to keep in constant touch with his troublesome capital. Had his dislike of Paris induced him to move still further off, to Rambouillet for instance, his descendant, perhaps, would never have become the prisoner of the revolutionary mob, and the fate of the French monarchy might have been different.

The work of transformation began in 1674, Mansart being the architect. At one time more than thirty-six thousand men were employed on the building. Death and disease were often busy amongst them, and in 1678 cartloads of dead were carried away every night from the temporary barracks in which the workmen were housed. But life was held cheap. Nothing was allowed to stay the progress of the work, and on May 6, 1682, though much still remained to be done, the Court was able to move into its new quarters.

The new palace was very splendid. Marble was the dominant feature in the decoration of walls and floors. As, however, it was soon discovered that the water used in washing trickled through the slabs and rotted the beams beneath, the flooring was taken up in most of the rooms and replaced by wood. But the walls were left undisturbed. They were adorned with *Gobelin* tapestry representing great events in the life of the monarch, and the ceilings were frescoed with allegorical subjects in honour of the same. All the furniture in the state apartments was at first made of silver, but before the century closed an empty exchequer and unsuccessful wars had compelled Louis to

send to the Mint whatever could be converted into current coin; and the silver tables, chairs, and cabinets, the *chefs d'œuvre* of Claude Ballin and many another, disappeared from Versailles and were never replaced. Still, enough remained of splendour and extravagance to draw from Fénelon in 1693 an indignant protest against a luxury that was 'monstrous and incurable.' The upholstery was rich and varied with the season; green and flame-coloured velvets were the favourite material in winter; brocades with gold and silver flowers and silks of all shades, in summer; and the marbles, mirrors, and tapestries on the walls, alone were worth a king's ransom. Most resplendent of all was the *Galerie des Glaces*, which served as the main artery of communication in the royal quarters, with its seventeen broad windows and its three hundred and six mirrors. Two large Savonnerie[1] carpets, masterpieces of art in their own way, completely covered the floor; two rows, each of twelve crystal lustres, and massive silver candlesticks placed at either end, lighted it at night. The window-curtains were of white damask, embroidered with gold.

But though there may be a dignity about life in marble halls, there is, at least in northern climates, very little comfort. The fireplaces, with their wide chimneys and massive mantelpieces, shot out a little warmth into the space immediately around them; but they were powerless to affect the broad and chilly surfaces of marble and metal in those large and lofty rooms. In the March of 1695 the wine froze in the glasses on the king's table, and even in more clement seasons there was a complete absence of that subtle and indefinable charm which we associate with the word 'cosy.' The royal people who were condemned to live in this splendid

[1] Some beautiful specimens of Savonnerie carpets may be seen in the Louvre.

bondage felt their chains and were glad to escape, whenever court etiquette made it possible, to the closets and *petits appartements* which they fitted up at the back of their state-rooms. No matter how small and dingy these private rooms might be, nor how devoid of outlook, anything was better than the oppressive magnificence of the surroundings which Louis had designed for the use of his family.

But, if the great people suffered from a plethora of space, their inferiors were crowded together in an insanitary jumble that made Versailles anything but an abode of bliss. North and south of the central block of buildings stretched two great wings, each three storeys high. The best apartments, those namely on the ground and first floors, looking on to the gardens, were, indeed, spacious and comfortable, and were allotted to the Princes of the Blood; but the rest of the building was a perfect labyrinth of small rooms, staircases, kitchens, and *entresols*, in which the smaller fry lived hugger-mugger, with little air and less comfort. Mme. de Staal, *femme de chambre* of the Duchesse du Maine, describes the kind of accommodation which was thought good enough for dependents at Sceaux. 'I was astonished,' she says, 'at seeing the dwelling-place assigned me. It was an *entresol*, so low and dark that I had to stoop when I walked, and feel my way about. One couldn't breathe for want of air, or warm oneself for lack of a fireplace. . . . The cold was beginning to make itself felt, and we had only one *garde-robe* between the four of us, in which to warm ourselves; but I preferred the cold to the ill-temper and insipid conversation of my companions. I used to shut myself up in my "cave" and console myself by reading. I hadn't even got this hovel to myself: the *première femme de chambre*, who passed her nights in the Duchesse du Maine's bedroom, shared it with me in the daytime.

She had her hours for sleeping, and, as she was married, it was the only place where she could see her husband in private. At such times I had to take up my quarters out of doors in a *bosquet*. If it was wet or cold I had no refuge but the galleries. My room at Versailles, where we passed the winter, was even more intolerable. No ray of sunlight had ever penetrated into it. A companion, more unsociable than the one I had had at Sceaux in the summer, was there day and night. The want of space led to continual disputes, or the smoke compelled us to leave the room altogether.' Nor did time bring improvements; for, a century later, the future Mme. Roland, visiting Versailles as a child, was painfully struck by the stench which pervaded the place and emanated chiefly from the wings.

But, if the unsavoury odours from the wings sometimes offended the king's nostrils, they did not seriously trouble his composure. No doubt he considered the discomfort of his courtiers as more than atoned for by proximity to the royal person. Anyhow, he had found in his own state and private apartments the fitting background for the dull but dignified existence which he mistook for greatness. But no human being, however indifferent he may be to the ordinary comforts of life, can live permanently in state; and, even before Versailles was completed, there were moments when Louis felt the burden of the rigid etiquette which he had imposed on himself as well as on others, and began to experience the need of some relaxation from the monotonous task of being splendid, some place, less vast and formal than Versailles, which would be more really his own, and to which he could escape occasionally in the company of a few chosen friends.

At the further end of the Park, barely a mile from the Château, there was a small hamlet with a church.

It was within easy reach of the palace, either on foot (and the king liked walking) or by boat along the artificial piece of water called the Canal. Louis purchased the property and, in 1670, erected on it a graceful porcelain building of one storey, named Trianon after the parish in which it stood—a sort of toy palace in which he could entertain Madame de Montespan safe from the prying eyes of the Court.

But the mania for building was stronger with Louis than the half-conscious craving for simplicity. In 1687 the porcelain toy was pulled down, and Trianon, though still limited to one storey, became a palace of marble, jasper, and porphyry, with gardens and fountains which rivalled those of Versailles. A story connected with its reconstruction is worth repeating. The new palace was just rising from the ground when the king, who had an accurate eye for measurements, noticed a defect in one of the windows, and pointed it out to Louvois, his minister of war, who was also *surintendant des bâtiments*—an important post under a king who was fond of building. Louvois, who was naturally obstinate and arrogant, and whose character had been still further spoiled by success, was vexed at being found in fault, and maintained that nothing was wrong with the window. Louis at the time said no more, and continued his walk. However, on the following day, he sent for Le Nôtre, who was an architect as well as landscape gardener, and asked him whether he had been recently to Trianon. Le Nôtre replied that he had not. Whereupon the king explained what was amiss, and told him to go and verify for himself. Le Nôtre, who was equally afraid of proving the king wrong and of offending Louvois, deferred the visit on various pretexts, till at last Louis grew angry and ordered both Le Nôtre and Louvois to meet him on the following day at Trianon. When they had all arrived on the ground, as Louvois still stuck

to his opinion, Louis ordered Le Nôtre to go and measure the window and to bring back a report. Whilst he was thus employed, Louvois continued to murmur crossly that the window was just like the others, and that there was no need for all this fuss. Louis said nothing, but waited for the decision with obvious anxiety. At last Le Nôtre returned. 'Well,' said the king, 'what have you found?' Le Nôtre was embarrassed, and took refuge in vague and uncertain phrases, till Louis, with a flash of anger, bade him speak clearly. Then he said bluntly that there was a defect, and explained its nature and extent. Louis at once turned upon Louvois and, in the presence of courtiers, valets, and workmen, rated him soundly, saying that his obstinacy was intolerable, and that, had he been allowed to have his way, the whole building would have had to come down again as soon as it was finished. The Minister, stung by this public rebuke, went home in a rage. There he found Saint-Pouange, Villacerf, and some other intimate friends. 'It's all up,' he said gloomily; 'judging by the way in which he has treated me over this window I fear I have lost my influence with the king. My one chance is to give him a war which will put his buildings out of his head and make me indispensable, and, by God! he shall have it!' According to the story Louvois kept his word, and the war of 1688 was the consequence.

When Trianon was completed, Louis had secured something of what he desired, something at all events which varied the monotony of Versailles. For Trianon had its own etiquette. Courtiers might present themselves at all hours of the day; but the meals were private and the king named the guests, who were usually ladies; and nobody but the necessary servants ever slept the night in the building. Sometimes the king would pay a Wednesday to Saturday visit; sometimes he would merely take his dinner or supper there, or pass a summer evening

among the flowers, which were changed daily in the terrace beds, and whose scent was so overpowering that, on occasions, the king and his companions were forced to fly to a distance. Trianon, too, served as a change of venue for the fêtes that celebrated a royal marriage or other great events. Here comedies were performed, and here the Duchess of Burgundy, after dancing through the night, could step from the terrace on to her barge and taste on the canal the freshness of a summer dawn.

But neither Versailles nor Trianon could permanently satisfy. 'Tired of the grandiose and of the crowd, Louis became convinced that he sometimes needed solitude and a cottage, and he searched in the neighbourhood of Versailles for some place where he could satisfy this new taste. He visited several spots; he traversed the hills that lie around Saint-Germain, and the great plain that unrolls itself at their feet. He was urged to fix upon Lucienne, from which there is a charming view; but he replied that the beauty of the situation would ruin him, and that, as he wanted a mere nothing, he wanted also a site which would make it impossible for him to attempt anything great. On the further side of the forest, and about eight miles from Versailles, he found, behind Lucienne, a deep and narrow valley, marshy, devoid of view, shut in by steep hills, extremely cramped, with a squalid village on one of its flanks called Marly. The work of reclaiming this cloaca, which drained all the neighbouring hills, was a long and difficult one: but at last the soil was dried and terraced, and the hermitage was built.'

Thus Saint-Simon—whose judgment was no doubt warped by his disapproval of the royal extravagance: for, as a matter of fact, the site of Marly is full of charm. Behind rises the forest, with its dark wall of

foliage, and stretches its two arms to right and left in a semicircular sweep. In front the ground slopes downwards, in a succession of broad terraces, to a rich and extensive plain watered by the Seine; and the low hills of Saint-Germain bound the horizon. On sunny afternoons in spring, at all events, when the orchards are white with blossom and the woods full of singing birds, it is not difficult to understand why Louis fixed upon this sheltered and secluded spot for his country retreat. At first it was strictly a hermitage, to which he came two or three times a year, from Wednesday to Saturday, with Madame de Maintenon and a dozen of the principal courtiers. But, by degrees, his liking for the place increased, and, with his liking, the original ideas of simplicity and solitude vanished: architects and landscape gardeners were called in, and Marly underwent the same transformations as Versailles.

The general design which underlay these changes was an original one, and aimed at producing, not a single impressive palace, but a group of detached buildings buried in foliage. In the centre was the royal residence, a square, two-storeyed edifice of white stone with a central hall which rose to the full height of the building; it was slightly raised above the level of the surrounding ground, and was approached on all four sides by a short flight of steps. Behind it, the famous Cascade of Marly, a veritable river cataract, fell down the steep slope of the hill; in front, the gardens sank gradually towards the plain in a series of terraces; and, on either side of them, half hidden in shady avenues, were twelve pavilions of one storey each (representing the twelve signs of the Zodiac) placed at regular intervals apart, but connected with each other and with the central building by a continuous trellised bower. To the right of the main building, and partially screened from it by quincunces of

limes, was another structure called the Perspective, in which the kitchens and other offices were situated, and where the less important guests were housed. The accommodation at Marly was thus neither spacious nor luxurious, and even the most exalted personages were expected to surrender their rooms in the daytime for public use. But the fame of the place rested not on its buildings but on its gardens, which even Madame, fond as she was of nature and prejudiced against all things French, admitted to be 'the finest gardens in the world.' Saint-Simon's graphic but censorious pen depicts some of their wonders. 'Forest trees brought ready-made from Compiègne and further still, three-quarters of which died and were immediately replaced; vast tracts of thick wood and shady avenues changed suddenly into huge lakes, with boats and gondolas, and reconverted as suddenly into forests of impenetrable gloom. I speak of what I have seen happen within six weeks. Fountains changed a hundred times: also cascades, with their succession of fresh statues: carp-ponds, with the most exquisite gilt and frescoed decorations, no sooner finished than destroyed, or redecorated with different designs by the same artists; the marvellous machine which brought water for the fountains, with its immense aqueducts, its pipes, and reservoirs, devoted solely to the use of Marly, and no longer supplying Versailles'; and to these we might add the vast array of marble statues and stone vases, which lined the walks and terraces and constituted in themselves a veritable museum of art. 'Such,' concludes Saint-Simon, 'was the fate of a place which had been a den of serpents, toads, frogs, and carrion; a place chosen solely because it afforded no excuse for expense. And such was the bad taste of the king in all things, and his arrogant delight in forcing nature, a delight which neither a disastrous war nor a rigid piety could blunt.

It is no exaggeration to say that Versailles, with all its magnificence, cost less than Marly.'[1]

In this, at all events, Saint-Simon was mistaken. From first to last Marly cost some eleven million francs; a considerable sum, but nothing in comparison with the capital that had been sunk in Versailles. In prosperous times this minor extravagance would probably have been overlooked; it was the exhaustion of the country and the grinding poverty of the taxpayer that made Marly a crime.

But no scruples and no remorse interfered with the king's enjoyment of his new estate. Marly became his favourite residence and praise of Marly a common theme with the courtier who desired to please. The Abbé de Polignac went so far as to assure the king, one day, when they were caught by a shower in the gardens, that 'at Marly the rain didn't wet.' But the ordinary mortal contented himself with less outrageous forms of flattery, and marked his enthusiasm for the place by his eagerness to be invited there. There was no lack of opportunity: for it was to this retreat that, in the latter part of his reign, Louis came nearly every week from Wednesday to Saturday; and, if he did not taste the pleasures of simplicity, at least he enjoyed a rather freer life. For Marly, like Trianon, had its special rules of conduct and etiquette, which were much less stringent than those in force at Versailles. If the wife was invited, her husband had the right to come also: anybody might join the king as he walked in the gardens, and leave him at pleasure; the guests dined and supped together in the company of the king, and, with certain limitations, sat where they liked;

[1] Marly was destroyed during the Revolution and many of the statues were removed to the Tuileries Gardens. Nothing now is left but the site, the wall of the garden, the clumps of lime trees, traces of terracing and fountains, and the *abreuvoir* into which the water finally flowed.

and, with the exception of the private cabinets of the king and Madame de Maintenon, there was hardly a room in the establishment which was not public property in the daytime. There was, too, a more studied attempt at gaiety. It is true that the king rarely spoke at meals, and that conversation at his table was carried on in whispers; but masked balls and other fêtes were frequent, and practical jokes were permitted which would have been severely censured at Versailles. It was at Marly that the Duchesse de Bourgogne and her companions broke into the Princesse d'Harcourt's bedroom, one cold winter night, and snowballed the lady in her bed; and that the austere Duc de Bourgogne placed petards under the same lady's chair at the card-table, and was only deterred from firing them by a friend's suggestion that the explosion would probably blow the princess to bits; at Marly, too, that the king's daughters, Madame la Duchesse and Madame de Chartres, borrowed pipes from the Swiss Guards one night and tasted the delights of smoking—an experiment which procured them a sound scolding from the king, to whose bedroom the subtle odour had penetrated; and it was at Marly that Louis himself unbent one memorable Twelfth Night. For 'when the cake appeared, the king exhibited a joy which seemed to call for imitation. Not content with crying "*la reine boit*," he beat upon his plate with spoon and fork, and made everyone follow his example, which caused an extraordinary din, and was repeated several times during the supper'—a piece of solemn gaiety which Saint-Simon cynically ascribes to the king's delight at hearing of the death of Barbesieux, a minister who had been forced upon him, and whom, consequently, he had never liked.

The restricted accommodation at Marly limited the number of guests. Princes of the Blood and the great court officials came by right; others were expected to

ask for an invitation; and to be 'of the Marlys' was the hall-mark of distinction and the ambition of every aspirant to power and influence. The form of application was simple: the petitioner presented himself in person with the words, 'Sire, Marly'; and, though refusals were frequent, the king liked people to persist in asking, even though they had no chance of success.

Marly was but a few miles from Versailles, and the distance was soon traversed; indeed, the king would often go over for a walk in the gardens or a supper in the Château, at times other than those of the regular visits. But there was one other journey which he rarely omitted, and which was a more formidable undertaking—namely, the annual visit to Fontainebleau in autumn. This entailed a removal of the whole Court, and was an expensive business. Some of the impedimenta went by road, the rest by canal. The king himself often broke the journey at Sceaux, the home of his favourite son the Duc du Maine, or at Petit-Bourg, the estate of the Duc d'Antin, Madame de Montespan's eldest and only legitimate child. But on occasions he would cover the whole distance without a stop, a matter of six hours at least, in a heavy coach and over rough roads. The ladies who were privileged to share the royal carriage often found the journey worse than tedious; and it was not without good reason that Madame de Maintenon invariably travelled in her own private coach. For no sooner were the wheels in motion than Louis would produce a hamper of eatables—preserved fruits, sweetmeats, and other delicacies—and press them, without cessation, on his companions, though he never partook of them himself. To refuse was to give offence; and, hungry or satiated, well or ill, the unhappy guests had to regale themselves on the unwholesome fare, with forced enthusiasm, till the gates of Fontainebleau at last brought relief.

Versailles, Marly, and Fontainebleau—these then were the three places round which court life centred, Versailles, as the official residence of the monarch, being the most important of the three. And, vast as it was, Versailles was never empty; for, apart from the army of men and women who were permanently attached to the Court, there was a constant stream of visitors. Louis liked to flatter himself with the thought that he was living in the midst of his nobility, and he expected even the less conspicuous members of the aristocracy to pay their court at Versailles at least once in the year. He had a keen eye, and a royal memory for faces; and, as he walked along the *Galerie des Glaces*, he took in at a glance all those who were present. Habitual absentees were noted, and their remissness sometimes cost them dear. For, when any of such had a favour to ask (and all petitions passed through the king's hands), Louis would say icily, 'I do not know him'; and the request would be negatived.

But such absentees were not very numerous. There were, it is true, always some people who cherished a feeling of independence, or genuinely preferred the seclusion of their own homes to the aimless activity of the Court. But they were few. Louis, by diminishing the local importance of the seigneur, had done much to destroy the attractions of a country life. Moreover, the very existence of Versailles had helped to foster that gregarious instinct which in our own day has given to our great towns their fatal power of fascination; and the French nobility flocked to the palace much as our own peasants are flocking to London, content to endure the cramped quarters and the minor discomforts of life if only they might share in the stir and bustle of the crowd and feast their eyes on the continual pageant. Hence the typical French nobleman of the early eighteenth century, who

read little and loved movement and excitement, began to find life in his ancestral *château* intolerably dull. To be banished from the Court was the direst fate that could befall him, next to death or the Bastille: and though, after a long experience of the splendid *ennui* that reigned at Versailles, many a man escaped gladly to the provinces for relaxation and refreshment, he soon wearied of the simplicity of his surroundings, and was attracted back to the glitter and the crowd as if by a magnet.

But besides the courtiers, who formed the resident or floating population of the place, the needy scions of decayed houses who had come to push their fortunes, and the county families who came and went, there was a whole army of servants and dependents, of whom a word may not be out of place.

The buildings and their precincts, the parks, gardens, and State apartments, were guarded by Swiss soldiers, honest, but not always very intelligent fellows, as an anecdote related by Madame, in her letters, will show. Shortly after her marriage with Monsieur, the king's brother, Madame, who loved the open air and unconventional amusements, was seized with a desire to take a moonlight walk in the gardens of Versailles. Accordingly she slipped out of her rooms and had reached the garden, when she was stopped abruptly by the Suisse on duty. Here is what passed, in her own words. '"My good man," I said, "let me take my walk; I am the wife of the king's brother." "So the king has a brother?" said he. "What?" I replied, "you don't know that! How long have you been in his Majesty's service?" "Thirty years." "What! and you don't yet know that the king has a brother? Why, you have to present arms to him when he passes!" "I dare say," he replied; "when they beat the drum, I present arms; but it makes no difference to me for whom. I have never asked whether the king has

a wife, or children, or a brother. I don't bother my head about such things." I laughed heartily,' concludes Madame, 'and so did the king when I told him the story.'

The command of these Suisses, commonly called the Cent-Suisses, was a much-coveted post, and ranked as inferior only to the great offices of the royal household. But besides these stolid sentries there was another body of Suisses employed for less reputable purposes. Louis, who mingled little with his courtiers, had, nevertheless, an itch to know the minutest details of their public haunts and private ways, which was strangely out of keeping with his usually gentlemanlike feelings; and he had authorised his chief valets, Bontemps, and subsequently Bloin, to enlist a number of these foreigners who, though wearing the king's uniform, were to take their orders only from the king's body-servants. Their function was to act as spies, at Marly as well as at Versailles and Fontainebleau. Morning, noon, and night, they prowled about the stairs, the passages, and the lavatories; patrolled the gardens and hid in the bushes; noticed where people went to and how long they stayed there; listened to private conversations, and dogged the steps of suspects; and reported all this unedifying gossip to their masters, who, in turn, retailed it to the king. And so successfully was this system of espionage carried out that the Court only half realised how much it was kept under surveillance; and many a man found his career blocked without being able to guess the cause. For, though the king frequently acted on the information he thus received, he never betrayed either his knowledge or its source.

Opposite the southern wing of the palace, and to-day serving as a military hospital, stood a large, square building, capable of lodging fifteen hundred inhabitants and called the *Grand Commun*. The upper storeys contained

the *appartements* of the superior domestics, pensioned servants, and sometimes even decayed gentlemen; the ground floor was occupied by kitchens, pantries, and cellars; for it was from here that the privileged few, such as the Dauphin and the king's grandsons, who received their board as well as lodging at Versailles, obtained their food. From here the king's meals were carried daily, in state, preceded by two guards, an usher, head-waiter, gentleman of the pantry, and others, and followed by two guards, whose duty it was to see that nobody approached the royal dishes.

The service of the interior of the palace was performed by an army of lackeys who were known, from their livery, as the *garçons bleus*, and whose insolence was often a source of annoyance to the less distinguished courtiers. At the head of this domestic hierarchy were the four *premiers valets de chambre* of the king, who were by no means the least important officials at Versailles. Louis, in despite of the proverb, was a hero to his own valets. 'He treated them well,' says Saint-Simon; 'especially those of the private apartments. It was amongst them that he felt most at his ease, and he talked familiarly to them, especially to the superior ones. They were thus constantly in a position to do people a good or a bad turn; consequently even the most powerful ministers honoured them publicly; as also did the Princes of the Blood and the Bastards,[1] not to speak of the less exalted personages. The insolence of most of them was great, and of such a kind that you had either to learn how to avoid it, or else to endure it with patience.'

Noyert, Bloin, and Bontemps, all had a finger in the secret history of the time. The last named of the three carried imitation of his master to a laughable extreme.

[1] *I.e.* the Duc du Maine and the Comte de Toulouse.

He was a widower, but his house was kept by a certain Mlle. de la Roche, who lived with him and governed him completely. She never appeared in public, and seldom at his private entertainments; but nobody doubted that she was his Maintenon, and that, in humble imitation of his royal master, he had married her secretly. 'Though boorish and brusque,' says Saint-Simon, 'he was respectful and knew his place. He had access to the king at all hours, and always by the back-doors. Through him passed all the secret messages and private letters to and from the king. It was enough to spoil a man, who for fifty years had enjoyed this intimacy, and who had the Court at his feet, from the royal children and the ministers downwards. But he never forgot his place. He never did harm to anybody and always used his credit to oblige. Many people owed him their fortune, but he never allowed them to allude to it. He procured favours for the sole pleasure of doing a kindness, and was, all his life, a father to the poor and a protector of the afflicted and disgraced, even though he did not know them personally; and was, perhaps, the best man of his time, with clean hands and a disinterested devotion to duty. Consequently his death, in 1701, caused general and genuine grief at the Court and in Paris.'

CHAPTER II

LIFE AT COURT

War and peace—The courtier's interests and ambitions—Intrigues for precedence—The daily routine—Games and amusements—Ennui.

LIFE at Versailles, which looked so attractive from the outside, was generally found, on closer acquaintance, to lead to mental stagnation and physical fatigue; and the courtier who had been drawn into the pageant in pursuit of wealth or excitement soon discovered that he was expected to pay for the gratification of his wishes by the sacrifice of his personal liberty. For, once inside the magic circle, he was reduced very much to the position of a schoolboy; his occupations, his interests, and even his amusements were no longer a matter for his individual choice, but were regulated for him by an inexorable discipline and a harassing etiquette. He almost ceased to be an independent agent, and became part of a system which demanded the surrender of his mind and body. Louis, who settled most things for his subjects, had a clear idea of the part which the nobility was destined to play in the new order of things. According to the royal scheme of life the whole duty of a *grand seigneur* consisted in serving the king's person in time of peace and fighting with the king's armies in time of war. There was no compulsion to do either; but, if a man of distinction sulked in his provincial *château*, the *intendants* stirred up a world of trouble for him; or, if he quitted the service without

some definite and cogent reason, such as wounds or sickness, the fact was noted against him. 'There's another leaving us!' the King would say irritably, and the desertion was not easily forgiven.

The long and frequent wars, which were a feature of the reign, gave ample opportunity for the winning of spurs; and nearly every nobleman celebrated the advent of manhood by serving in a campaign or two. The very methods of warfare then in vogue seem to have been devised to meet the requirements of court life; for, with the first onset of winter, the rival armies withdrew to permanent quarters and inactivity, and the young warriors were able to return to Versailles in time for the festivities of the winter season, and display in the ball-room the laurels they had gathered on the battle-field. But, as a career offering an outlet for talent and a field for legitimate ambitions, service in the king's army was falling into disrepute. The great days were over, and the prizes no longer went habitually to the deserving. A brilliant action, such as Fortune occasionally threw in the way of her favourites, was still certain of a reward; but patient application and the more solid qualities were mostly overlooked. Backstairs influences and court intrigues settled promotion, and the great commands went to the successful wirepullers. Extravagance, too, was impairing efficiency and destroying the wholesome traditions of the great captains. The evil example of the Court had spread to the army. Wealthy regimental officers set a standard of luxury, even on active service, which ruined their poorer comrades, and the great review at Compiègne in 1698, where for three weeks the army kept open table for the king and his Court, had left behind it, in many cases, a crushing load of private debt. Nor was there much glory to be won. The incompetence of the marshals and a general slackening of discipline and morals made service

under Vendôme or Villeroy a very different thing from the triumphant warfare of Condé and Turenne. Still, war was the traditional pursuit of the *ancienne noblesse*; and, if they received hard knocks from Marlborough and Eugène, the young warriors were never deficient in that quality which is the first virtue of the savage and the last of the decadent aristocrat namely, physical courage.

But for those who had no taste or aptitude for war, and for all in times of peace, there was a great dearth of occupation. It is well to remember at the outset from how many of the rational interests of a leisured class the French nobility was explicitly shut off. Politics especially were a forbidden subject. The monarchy had had a hard struggle for power with the great nobles. It had triumphed in the end, and Louis XIV had placed its supremacy beyond dispute. But he was haunted by the memory of past dangers, and the system which he elaborated was based on the exclusion of the great families from all posts of political importance. The empty honour of great court offices was still reserved for them; but the ministers and their subordinates were, with few exceptions, chosen from the humbler ranks of the *petite noblesse*. Such ministers were entirely dependent on the king, and a Louvois or a Chamillart could be dismissed at a moment's notice without offending powerful territorial influences. Outside the charmed circle any interest in political subjects was severely discouraged. Affairs of State concerned only the king and his Ministers: officially, everything was in the hands of an all-wise and beneficent ruler, and public discussion or criticism of his actions savoured of impertinence. And to make sure that the royal wishes in this respect were carried out private letters were opened in the post, their contents examined, and compromising passages copied out and submitted to the king. No doubt, in the intimacy of private life, friends would shake their heads and discuss

the faults of the government; but the consciousness that they were cut off from all power of influencing affairs, and from all responsibility for the future, did certainly tend to divert men's minds from the dangers that lay ahead. Of what use was it to study the political problems of the day, when knowledge was regarded as a dangerous possession, and when to think differently from the king and his Ministers almost amounted to treason?

The fate of Vauban was a melancholy example of the dangers that attended any officious attempt at interference. Of all the State departments none stood in greater need of reform than the Treasury. The system of taxation was not only oppressive but sometimes positively immoral. In 1707, for example, a tax was imposed on baptisms and marriages; and, though it had to be withdrawn in face of the popular outcry, the mere fact that such an absurdity should have been thought of shows how little forethought or common-sense was brought to bear on the financial problems of the country. And, if the taxes were oppressive, the manner of collecting them was ruinous. Only a portion of the revenue actually paid found its way into the royal coffers; the rest went to enrich a whole army of middlemen and agents, who thus contrived to batten on the misery of the country.[1]

Marshal Vauban, the hero of a hundred sieges, whose character and services had won him a special place in the esteem of the king, had long been distressed by the misery of the peasants and the financial ruin which he saw impending over his country. He had a head for statistics; and for twenty years, during which he had travelled through France in all directions, he had made careful notes of the value of land and commerce and industry, the nature of the taxes imposed, and the manner

[1] Saint-Simon estimates that between 1689 and 1700 the *gens d'affaires* made a profit of 82 million francs.

of collecting them. Where he could not visit in person he procured accurate information from competent people; and the final result of his labours was a book, in which he proposed the substitution of a single impost, to be called 'the Royal tithe,' for the heterogeneous duties that were ruining agriculture and paralysing trade, and a simple method of collecting it that would do away with the middleman. By this system he calculated that the taxpayer would pay much less while the Treasury would receive much more. But his proposals created a panic among the vested interests. Chamillart, the Minister of Finance, an honest but not very capable man, took alarm; and the king received the marshal and his book more than coldly. Any independent interest in the affairs of the country cancelled with Louis XIV the memory of past services. Vauban was lectured for his presumption, and made to feel that he had completely lost the royal favour. Heartbroken at the failure of his plans and the disgrace into which he had fallen, he died a few months afterwards, unnoticed and unlamented by the king to whose service he had devoted his life and his talents. Is it surprising that the more prudent and worldly-wise declined to burn their fingers, and preferred to leave such dangerous topics severely alone?

Nor was literary activity, or learning of any sort, encouraged. There had indeed been a golden period during which Molière, La Fontaine, and Racine had added lustre to the Court under royal patronage. But Louis had never possessed any real taste for literature. He had no love of knowledge for its own sake, and he eschewed books. Even on matters of religion, which in later years became his special hobby, he was unusually ignorant; and his piety took the form of a relentless war on all independent thought. Criticism and new ideas he regarded as dangerous, and subversive of the State. Even

history had to be written, not with the object of arriving at truth, but as a means of extolling the existing *régime*; and religious speculation was branded as heresy and burned by the hangman unless it squared with the private views of Madame de Maintenon or the king's confessor. In such an atmosphere literature was not likely to flourish or genius to thrive; and the itch for writing and criticism, forcibly repressed, had to find relief in private memoirs, or in those libellous and often scurrilous songs which flooded Paris, and which, in the end, probably did more to destroy the prestige of the monarchy than any amount of open and healthy criticism.

Thus cut off from two of the most rational interests of life, the active brains of the French Court were compelled to seek their stimulus or satisfaction in other directions. They found it usually in petty intrigues, for which the system of government organised by Louis XIV afforded ample opportunities. Theoretically the king was the sole dispenser of rewards; practically he was in the hands of a few individuals, each jealous of the other, each anxious to secure or increase his or her hold and to keep possible rivals at a distance, and each compelled to exercise extreme caution. For Louis was very jealous of his independence, and, at the mere suspicion that he was being used as a puppet, he was capable of breaking loose and upsetting the most carefully laid plans.

This inner ring was composed of the people who had frequent access to the king and the consequent power of influencing his decisions; members of the Royal family, including Madame de Maintenon, most powerful of all; the Ministers whose official duties brought them into daily contact with their master; the great court officials who had the private *entrées*; certain individuals whose services or character had won them the king's personal

friendship; and, last but not least, the confidential body-servants who often had the chance of putting in a word that might make or mar a fortune. This select body practically controlled the royal patronage, and distributed the prizes which the courtier coveted—the sinecures that enriched without effort, the pensions, and the offices of dignity and distinction. The aspirant for wealth or favour had therefore to approach his object through one or other of these accredited channels. The game required much skill and an intimate knowledge of the weaker side of human nature. There were rivals to outwit and prejudices to conciliate. It was necessary to form useful alliances with the people who were, to use a slang phrase, 'in the know,' and to gauge accurately the force of those under-currents which were continually moving beneath the apparently smooth surface. To hail a rising star prematurely, or to cling too long to a falling minister, might spell failure. Constant watchfulness, a nice judgment, and early information of the most trivial personal incidents were essential to success. A royal frown or a sarcastic phrase might be only the effect of a momentary pique; but it might also be the precursor of a storm that would sweep away existing landmarks. Both were, anyhow, part of the situation, and it was important to know them. Hence, gossip and speculation were always rife: all the more so because, in a clever but idle community, such personal incidents were the chief topic of interest and the main incentive to wit: and, as a consequence, conversation sparkled but charity was at a discount.

But it was not only a competition for place and wealth that set the Court intriguing. Whenever people with leisure and money are cut off from the actualities of life and the opportunities of useful service, questions of rank, privilege, and precedence, assume an unnatural importance.

Louis XIV. was an adept in the art of enhancing the value of trifles and creating distinctions which whetted the personal ambitions of his followers. To be invited to Marly, to walk fifth instead of eighth in a procession, to enter the royal carriage, to be seated where others stood—these were privileges which formed the absorbing interest of lives that were free from the more sordid lust of wealth. Such distinctions, if they could not be won by a *coup de main*, were not beyond the reach of a slow and subtle diplomacy; and as much ingenuity and forethought were often expended on their attainment as go to the making of an international treaty or the passing of an important measure.

Court etiquette was, like the British Constitution, a network of complicated but unwritten rules that founded their authority on precedent; consequently an accurate knowledge of precedents was essential to a man who meant to use the laws of procedure for his own aggrandisement. Precedents were often created on the spur of the moment and without any thought of the future. When Henry IV, for example, after the fall of the Ligue, received the Spanish Ambassador at Monceaux, he led his guest into the gardens which he had just constructed and of which he was somewhat proud, and, very naturally, put on his hat. The ambassador, who, according to Spanish etiquette (which differed from the French), was accustomed to cover himself when the king did so, followed his example. Henry IV was offended; but, not wishing to express his vexation openly to the ambassador, he signed to M. le Prince, M. de Mayenne, and M. d'Épernon, who happened to be the only great noblemen present, to put on their hats also. This apparently trivial incident had, from the Court point of view, quite important consequences; for, as a result, the three noblemen in question, and their descendants, secured the right of remaining covered in the

presence of royalty. Nor was this all. The other Princes of the Blood could not be left in a position inferior to that of a mere nobleman like M. de Mayenne ; and finally the cardinals, as being superior to all others in rank, claimed and received the same privilege. Such an episode was full of suggestiveness for a student of court history, and served to show how much could be made out of a lucky accident.

The great object, therefore, of an ambitious man was to seize an opportunity, when the king was off his guard and rivals absent, to secure some concession which might be construed into a precedent and made to cover cases that were never originally contemplated, M. de Vaudemont, taking advantage of an infirmity which made it difficult for him to walk or stand, gradually accustomed people to see him seated at Marly (where the rules of etiquette were relaxed) in the presence of his superiors in rank and even of the royal princes, and afterwards tried, though unsuccessfully, to convert this concession to his weakness into a permanent right ; and the Lorraines deliberately falsified a piece of tapestry, representing an historical scene, in order that they might use it as evidence in support of certain claims to precedence which they had put forward as foreign princes.

And if ambitious men were constantly striving to exalt themselves and their families by surreptitious means, the most sober and unambitious were equally determined to resist such encroachments and defend their own privileges. Hardly anybody, however modest and unassuming, was indifferent to these questions, and even people who were not personally concerned took sides and followed the struggle with passionate interest. The following scene, which is typical of the age, will serve to illustrate the excitement which such subjects provoked.

The year was 1706 : the time, a summer evening about

eight; and the place, Versailles. For several hours the king and his council had been assembled in secret session to decide an issue which had, for months past, deeply stirred all classes in the Court, but which chiefly concerned the Duc de Rohan. Daguesseau, Chamillart, the chancellor, and the Duc de Bourgogne, had all spoken in weighty terms befitting the gravity of the occasion. Outside the tension was extreme; the antechambers, the passages, even the Cour de Marbre, were packed with people eagerly waiting for the momentous decision and speculating on the nature of the verdict. At last the king pronounced the award; the council rose, the doors were thrown open, and the Duc de Bourgogne was the first to come out. The Duc de Rohan, pale with the prolonged suspense, had stationed himself near the door; he stepped up to the prince and asked his fate. The prince looked embarrassed and made no reply. 'At least,' said the duke, 'tell me whether the case has been decided.' 'Oh, as far as that is concerned, yes,' replied the prince, 'and irretrievably, without any possibility of appeal.' Then, turning to the chancellor, he asked him whether he might repeat the verdict. The chancellor assured him that there could be no objection. 'In that case, sir,' said the prince, 'I may tell you that you have won on every point, and I am delighted to be the bearer of the good news.'

As the first word of the decision became known, the antechamber and the adjoining rooms were filled with shouts of joy and triumph, taken up and repeated in the Cour de Marbre by the waiting throng, who for once, in the enthusiasm of the moment, forgot the respect due to the place and gave vent to their suppressed excitement. 'We have won!' they cried, 'and *they* have lost, hurrah!' And the Duc de Rohan could scarcely force his way through the crowd of his supporters, all anxious to grasp

his hand or press him to their hearts, in time to offer his thanks to the king as he came out of the palace for a walk in the gardens.

And what was the great cause which had set the whole of Versailles in a ferment? The story is too long a one to give in detail; but, briefly, the question at issue was this: whether, as M. de Guémené, the head of a junior branch of the family, maintained, only the eldest son of the Duc de Rohan was entitled to the name of Rohan, or whether, as the father claimed, all his sons were privileged to bear it; and by a majority of votes the council had decided in favour of the duke.

Such personal questions figured very largely in the lives of the *ancienne noblesse*, and perhaps it may be well to give a few more concrete examples. One of the best prelates of the time was M. de Noyon, Bishop of Orléans, 'a man of medium height,' says Saint-Simon, 'stout, with a red face, an aquiline nose, fine eyes, and an air of candour and benevolence that captivated at first sight and grew on acquaintance. He had passed his youth at Court; but his life had been so pure that no one, old or young, dared to risk an improper jest in his presence.' He was rich, but simple in his tastes, and gave largely in charity; and his episcopal income he devoted entirely to good works. He spent at least six months of the year in his diocese, was a careful and discerning administrator, and displayed a tolerance which was rare at the time. His intervention had saved the Huguenots of Orléans from the horrors of the *dragonnades*, and he was universally beloved. The king, too, liked and respected him, and often regretted his prolonged absence in his diocese. At Court he held the honourable post of chief almoner. This office gave him an official place at the prie-dieu; but for the rest of the service he was unprovided for and had to stand during the sermon like the other bishops.

At sermons there had been originally three official places immediately behind the king; one on the right for the grand-chamberlain, another on the left for the first gentleman of the chamber, and a third, behind them, for the captain of the guard. But the king had specially created a fourth place, immediately behind the grand-chamberlain, for Guitry, who had subsequently been killed at the passage of the Rhine. This place the Bishop of Orléans had gradually appropriated for himself. Had anybody else attempted to annex it, there would have been a general outcry; but the bishop was universally liked and respected, and nobody said a word. Presumably the king did not notice what was happening behind him, and remained unaware of the encroachment. All went well till the spring of 1696, when the Lenten sermons were preached by a certain Père Séraphin. The king was much struck by the preacher, and, as was his way on such occasions, he wished everybody to hear the discourses. Absentees were noted, and two of the most important, Vendôme and the Duc de la Rochefoucauld, were reproached for their lack of devotion. Vendôme replied bluntly that he wasn't going to listen to a man who could say what he liked without fear of contradiction; at which the king laughed. De la Rochefoucauld, who was more of a courtier, adopted a different line of defence. He said that he could not bring himself to beg for a seat, like the humblest of mortals, from the officer who distributed them; to find himself compelled to apply early if he wanted a good place; to wait a long time before the sermon began; and to sit wherever he was told to. Thereupon the king at once allotted to him the chair which had once been Guitry's, and which Monsieur d'Orléans had come to regard as his own by prescriptive right. The bishop was furious; but, not daring to complain openly to the king, he eased his mind by

quarrelling with De la Rochefoucauld, who happened to be one of his oldest and most intimate friends. The Court took sides, and the majority, including the Lorraine *coterie*, favoured the prelate. Monsieur, who was a tool in the hands of the Chevalier de Lorraine, was called in to aid, but without effect. The king tried to recall the bishop to reason; but neither the royal persuasion nor the entreaties of De la Rochefoucauld, who was really grieved at this breach of a long friendship, were of any avail. The bishop was inflexible, and seeing that his case was hopeless he retired in a huff to his diocese.

In the following year he was obliged to return to Court to take up his duties as almoner, and his arrival renewed the scandal. At his first audience he threw himself at the king's feet and protested, with little dignity, that he would rather die than witness the degradation of an office which he had held for thirty-four years. De la Rochefoucauld, too, interceded on his behalf, and begged to be allowed to forego a privilege which he had accepted in complete ignorance that it was claimed by the chief almoner. But the king, who did not like to alter his decisions, still less to have them criticised, was obstinate; and, though habitually courteous, even when angry, he used on this occasion some strong words, saying that, 'if the decision lay between the bishop and a valet, he would decide in favour of the valet.' M. d'Orléans came away from the interview overwhelmed with grief and retired once more to his diocese.

And there the matter might have ended, had not the king's respect for the bishop proved stronger than his resentment. He looked about for some means of reconciliation, and, when the important see of Metz fell vacant, he appointed to it the nephew of M. d'Orléans. The bishop was delighted; and, to crown his joy, a chair next to, but below, that of M. de la Rochefoucauld, was

allotted to the post of first almoner. He returned to the sunshine of Court, and became once more fast friends with De la Rochefoucauld.

Another story, almost as illuminating, is related of the same family. The Duc de Coislin, brother of the Bishop of Orléans, was chiefly noted for his excessive politeness; a politeness which was shown to all, irrespective of rank, and which sometimes bordered on the ridiculous. One day he happened to be at the Sorbonne where the second son of the Duc de Bouillon, who was being educated for the priesthood, was to deliver a thesis in public. On such occasions it was customary for friends of the family concerned to put in a complimentary appearance, and, as the Bouillons were a powerful clan, there was a large and fashionable gathering, including M. le Prince and other Princes of the Blood. Coislin happened to be the only duke present; but, as he was at that time junior member of his order, he placed himself modestly at the end of the ducal row, leaving several places vacant between himself and the corner where the prelates began, in case any of his seniors should come in later. Scarcely was he seated when Novion, *premier président* of the Paris Parliament, came in with a following of *présidents à mortier*. Now the presidents of Parliament were at that time engaged in a dispute with the dukes over a question of precedence in Parliament, and Novion, knowing Coislin's reputation for courtesy, and finding him the only duke present, imagined that he had secured a favourable opportunity for establishing a useful precedent. Accordingly he slipped into the ducal row and sat down on one of the vacant chairs between Coislin and the bishops. But he had mistaken his man. Coislin was stung into action; picking up his chair and planting it suddenly in front of Novion he sat down firmly upon it, and wedged the unhappy president so tightly in that he was unable to move hand or foot.

The thesis was interrupted, and the eyes of the audience were turned on this unusual spectacle ; but Coislin refused to budge from his post of vantage until M. le Prince had promised on behalf of Novion (whose word the angry peer refused to accept) that the offence should not be repeated. Then at last the victim was released, and slunk away, followed by a scornful ' off with you ' from his conqueror.

It is instructive to note how impervious Coislin's contemporaries (not usually lacking in a sense of humour) were to the comic side of such an episode. The four Princes of the Blood, and all the important people who had witnessed or heard of the affair, paid visits of congratulation to him without delay ; on the following morning the king complimented him on his presence of mind ; and, years after, Saint-Simon related the occurrence as a creditable episode in a life that was otherwise partly blemished by excessive civility.

Nor were these wrangles over precedence hushed even in the presence of death. Mme. de Saint-Simon, mother of the memoir-writer, though only distantly related to the Condés, had been invited by M. le Prince to follow the body of his daughter, Mlle. de Condé, to the grave, in the company of Mlle. d'Enghien, sister of the deceased. As Mme. de Saint-Simon was leaving the house to enter the mourning coach, the Duchesse de Châtillon, her junior, brushed past her, jumped into the carriage, and planted herself in the post of honour next to Mlle. d'Enghien. At this, Mme. de Saint-Simon refused to enter the carriage and begged Mlle. d'Enghien either to secure for her her proper place or to allow her to withdraw. Mme. de Châtillon replied that, though she was junior in point of rank to Mme. de Saint-Simon, she was more nearly related to the deceased, and that, on this and similar occasions, relationship and not rank determined precedence. At last Desgranges, who was

superintending the arrangements, was appealed to and decided the squabble in favour of Mme. de Saint-Simon; and the *cortège* started. But he had to interfere once more to prevent Mme. de Châtillon's carriage, which was following behind, from forcing its way into the procession in front of its rival. Public opinion rightly condemned the conduct of Mme. de Châtillon; but it was too much accustomed to similar battles, waged over corpses, to find Mme. de Saint-Simon's resentment wanting either in dignity or in respect for the dead.

These questions of personal aggrandisement or self-defence were the most serious of the courtier's occupations. The rest of his life was divided between the performance of his semi-official duties and an attempt to kill time.

His duties began with the king's awakening and ended with the royal *coucher*, and many of them were connected with details of the toilet for which we demand the utmost privacy. But the French monarchs did not know what privacy was. From the cradle to the grave they dressed and undressed, prayed, ate, and took medicine in public. 'The princes in this country,' wrote Madame, 'unfortunately cannot take a step without the whole world knowing it'; and nearly a century later, at the birth of his first child, Louis XVI had to fight his way through the promiscuous crowd, which had gathered in the queen's bedroom, to force open the windows and let in a little reviving air.

Louis XIV was awaked every morning at 8 o'clock by the *premier valet de chambre* on duty, who had slept the night in the king's chamber. The chief doctor and the royal surgeon entered at the same time, rubbed him down, and often changed his shirt. At 8.15 the grand-chamberlain was summoned, together with the first gentleman of the chamber for the year, and the privileged few who had the *grandes entrées* came in with them.

The chamberlain drew the curtains of the bed and presented the holy water. This was the opportunity for any of the *grandes entrées* who had something to say to, or ask of, the king, to advance and make his request. Ordinarily they were only there for a few moments and then withdrew. The chamberlain next handed the king the Office of the Saint-Esprit, and he and the first gentleman of the chamber passed into the council-room. When he had repeated the short service the king called them back. The chamberlain handed him his dressing-gown, and the *secondes entrées* were introduced. A few moments afterwards, what was called *la chambre* was admitted, that is to say the general body of courtiers who had been waiting in the Œil de Bœuf—first, the most distinguished, and afterwards the rank and file; they found the king putting on his stockings, for 'he did almost everything for himself with ease and skill.' Every other day he shaved before a hand-mirror held in front of him, wearing a short wig, without which he never appeared in public, not even in bed on the days when he took medicine. While dressing he conversed with his personal friends on general topics, such as hunting, and occasionally said a word to some of the others. The toilet completed, he said his prayers at the *ruelle*, a low wooden balustrade which railed off the bed from the rest of the room; all the clergy present knelt, the laity remained standing; and finally he passed into his *cabinet*.

The courtier's next duty was to wait in the *Galerie des Glaces* till the council-meeting was over, and accompany the king to Mass in the chapel. During the latter half of the reign piety had become the fashion; but it was an enforced and official piety, and the ladies, who thronged the tribunes, used to place lighted candles in front of them, nominally in order to read their office books but really to make sure that their presence was

observed. Brissac, major of the body-guards, once played these *fausses dévotes* a fine trick. The king was expected to come to the *Salut* which followed the usual evening service. The guards were posted and the ladies all in their places, when, towards the close of the evening service, Brissac appeared alone in the king's tribune, raised his *bâton*, and cried, 'Guards of the king, retire and withdraw to your rooms! The king is not coming.' Immediately the guards withdrew, the ladies whispered to one another, the little candles were extinguished, and all the fair worshippers, with the exception of the Duchesse de Guiche, Mme. de Dangeau, and a few others, beat a retreat. Meanwhile Brissac had had the guards stopped at the exits of the chapel, and, as soon as the congregation had dispersed, he recalled them to their posts. When the king arrived he was much astonished to find the tribunes empty, and asked the reason. Brissac told him what he had done, and the king laughed heartily. The story spread rapidly, and Brissac's popularity with the fair sex was not enhanced.

After Mass the next public function was the king's dinner, which he ate in his bedroom at a square table in front of the central window. There was no brilliant conversation to reward the spectators, for, in his later years, the king talked but little; as Madame remarked, 'it seemed as if he had limited himself to a fixed number of words in his lifetime and was afraid of exceeding the limit.' Occasionally he would exchange a remark with one or other of the more important people who were immediately behind him, but the rank and file had to be content with a silent contemplation of the royal back.

The afternoons were generally free. The king walked, or was wheeled about in his gardens, or, if the weather were bad, he spent the time in Madame de Maintenon's rooms. The evening brought a renewal of court functions.

In winter-time, on three nights of the week, there was *comédie*; on the other three, a ceremony called *appartement*. It consisted of a gathering of the whole Court in the state-rooms, and lasted from seven till ten. First there was music; then tables were set in all the rooms for all sorts of games, including billiards. Anyone who found the tables occupied might order a fresh one and play at what game he liked and with whom he liked. Beyond the billiard-room a small room was set apart for refreshments. The whole suite of apartments was brilliantly lighted with lamps and candles. In the early days of this ceremony the king used to show himself for a short time, and would sometimes join in a game. But for many years he had ceased to attend, and passed his evenings in Madame de Maintenon's rooms, working with his Ministers in turn. Still, he liked the rooms to be full, and the courtiers were assiduous in their attendance.

At ten the king supped, and if he was supping in public (as he did several times in the week) it was once more the courtier's duty to be present. The supper was as formal and melancholy as the dinner, the only point of interest being the prodigious amount that the king ate. There was, however, one memorable occasion when the proceedings were enlivened by a scene.

All the gold tassels and fringes had mysteriously disappeared one night from the furniture in the state apartments. The theft was astonishing in a place so much frequented and so carefully guarded, and had produced a great sensation. Bontemps, the premier valet, was in despair; but, in spite of the most rigorous search, the thief remained undiscovered. One evening, when the king was seated at supper, a package, about the size of a priest's hat and thrown from nobody knew where, fell with a thud on one end of the table. Without starting, the king half turned his head and remarked

quietly, 'I think that must be my tassels.' The day of bombs and dynamite was still far distant, but the suspicious looking parcel was opened with great care and the king was not allowed to touch it. Inside were the missing fringes, and, pinned to the outside was a paper with these words written in a feminine but obviously disguised hand: 'Take back your fringes, Bontemps; the worry is greater than the pleasure. I kiss the king's hands.' 'That is very insolent,' remarked the king, but nothing further was said or done, and it was never known who perpetrated the outrage.

Shortly after supper the king retired to bed. This again was a public ceremony, until a bad attack of gout in 1705 caused Louis to alter the procedure and limit the spectators to those who had the *entrées*. It had a ritual of its own, which gave scope for those trifling marks of distinction which Louis knew how to make valuable. Foremost amongst these was the *bougeoir*. Although the room in which he undressed was well lit, the almoner for the day held a lighted candle whilst the king said his prayers. The prayer finished, the almoner handed the candle to the *premier valet*, who carried it before the king as he moved to his armchair. The king then glanced round, and named aloud one of the company, to whom the valet presented the candle. This honour was usually reserved for the most distinguished in rank or birth; occasionally it was conferred on others, whose age or office gave them a special claim, rarely on ambassadors, except the Papal Nuncio, and, at the close of the reign, the Spanish ambassador. The favoured individual took off his gloves, advanced, and held the candle while the king got into bed; then he returned it to the *premier valet*, who passed it on, at will, to some member of the *petit coucher*.

These were the normal duties of a courtier at Versailles,

and they formed a routine which helped to pass the day. The rest of his life was spent in a persistent, but often fruitless, endeavour to amuse himself.

The most popular and exciting of outdoor amusements was hunting, which did at least conduce to a healthy bodily fatigue that must have been welcome. The Bourbons were all mighty hunters before the Lord, and the forests that surrounded Paris were full of game. Even wolves were fairly plentiful, and, in the cold winter of 1696, a royal courier was attacked and killed by these animals in the Forest of Marly. There were staghounds and wolf-hounds, and ample opportunities for following the chase; for, apart from the royal kennels, the Dauphin had packs of his own at Meudon, and the Condés hunted the forests of Chantilly. The king himself, after an accident to his arm in 1683, followed the hunt in a light carriage drawn by horses, small but so swift that they were seldom far behind the horsemen. The *al fresco* picnics, which were usually part of the entertainment, furnished a welcome relief from the monotony of the meals at Versailles.

Dancing, too, was a favourite form of amusement. The State balls at Versailles were rather ponderous and formal affairs, in which the magnificence of the dresses hardly made up for the absence of gaiety and *abandon*; but the masked and fancy-dress balls at Marly gave scope for pleasing ingenuity and quaint surprises. On one occasion it was the Duc de Valentinois who carried off the palm for originality, disguised as a lady and raised on stilts, 'high and broad as a tower'; advancing to the middle of the room he threw open his long cloak, and out trooped a band of Italian comedians—Harlequin, Scaramouche, Polichinelle, and others. On others the Dauphin would enter with his little court, all drolly masked and with three or four changes of disguise apiece; or the Duchesse de Bourgogne would appear,

coquettishly dressed as a Spanish girl, accompanied by Mme. de Dangeau, in an antique German costume, and the Comtesse d'Estrées, decked out as a goddess; or the gay little Duc de Berry would enter as a *baron de la Crasse*, and dance a comic *pas seul*. And once when the Duc d'Antin, in the exuberance of his spirits, sent M. de Brienne sprawling at the feet of the exiled queen of England,[1] the accident was greeted with shouts of laughter.

Sometimes a touch of malice mingled with the fun. There was, at Marly, a married lady who, although young, was beginning to make a name for herself. The Comte d'Evreux had been paying her marked attentions, and his advances had not been coldly received. The Court, which was keenly alive to such things, had taken due note of the incipient romance, and discussed it in its witty but cruel way. One evening there was a masked ball. In the middle of the dance a figure entered wearing a mask with four faces, representing, unmistakably, four well-known personages at Court. The Comte d'Evreux was one of the four. Under the long cloak that concealed the dancer's figure was some sort of mechanism which enabled him to turn the faces round at will. When the new arrival had shown himself sufficiently to attract general attention, he went straight up to the lady in question, and, turning the Comte d'Evreux's face upon her, invited her to dance; and during the whole of the minuet, which he prolonged beyond the ordinary limits, he contrived to keep the same face continually turned upon her. The point of the jest was too obvious to be missed; the spectators watched and smiled, and the poor lady turned all the shades of red. Fortunately her husband was not in the room at the time, but she was extremely thankful when the ordeal was over.

[1] Mary of Modena, wife of James II.

A still crueller jest was played on M. de Luxembourg by M. le Prince, the most inveterate of practical jokers. M. de Luxembourg had a young and pretty wife; unfortunately her beauty was not matched by a corresponding virtue, and her evil reputation was 'known to everybody in France except her husband.' A dearth of dancers had procured her an invitation to Marly, and, for the same reason, it had been decided that her husband should dance too. M. le Prince undertook to provide him with a suitable costume; and, as the prince was a great authority on all matters connected with *fêtes*, M. de Luxembourg was highly flattered. But the malicious prince seized the opportunity to array his unconscious victim in a wealth of gauze and muslin crowned by a gigantic head-piece, which symbolised, unmistakably, a wronged husband. In this garb he was led into the ball-room, and, a sudden shifting of the mask having revealed his identity, he was greeted with a burst of laughter. M. de Luxembourg was not 'quick at the uptak,' and mistaking the laughter for a tribute to the originality of his costume, he bowed to right and left, advanced with mincing steps, and lent himself to the jest with such complete fatuity that even the king, in spite of his usual reserve, could not help laughing; while the wife looked daggers, and M. le Prince watched the success of his malice from the background.

Whilst the Duchesse de Bourgogne lived, her love of amusement and the king's devotion to her made dances and other festivities of frequent occurrence. Aspirants for the royal favour vied with each other in procuring her amusement, and even when defeat abroad had cast a general gloom over society the round of pleasure did not cease. These dances sometimes lasted till 8 A.M., and Saint-Simon, whose wife accompanied the duchess on all occasions, says that for three weeks in 1700 they were

hardly ever out of bed in daylight, and that Ash Wednesday came as a welcome relief.

Hunting and dancing were comparatively simple pleasures; but the simpler pleasures of life only charm as a change and relaxation from the drudgery of hard work. When they cease to afford a contrast they soon cloy, and the unhappy people who are condemned to live for pleasure have to look about them for some more violent form of excitement. The *ancienne noblesse* sought and found it in cards. *Hocca*, *lansquenet*, and *hombre* were the favourite games, and the stakes were often very high. Louis, in the heyday of his youth, had gambled with the best; but in his later years he confined himself to an occasional game of solitaire or reversi, and never touched a card. So far as he could he discouraged high play; but the gambling instinct was strong around him, and more than once he was called upon to pay the gaming debts of members of his own family. Even the clergy were not always free from the common taint. The Archbishop of Rheims lost two thousand *louis* in half an hour, in a carriage, while nominally following a boar hunt. Heavy losses ruined more than one life. Reineville, lieutenant of the Guards, who had a career before him, was obliged to disappear, and was found years afterwards serving as a common trooper in the army of the Elector of Bavaria; Permillac, another officer of promise, shot himself through the head in bed; and, in the winter of 1698, if Madame is to be relied on, no less than four officers committed suicide for similar reasons.

Cheating was not unknown. Seissac, rich, a man of fashion, and at one time master of the wardrobe, was caught almost *flagrante delicto* at the royal table. But to an intrepid player much was forgiven; and, after a period of exile in England, he was allowed to return, and

became once more an *habitué* of the card-tables both at Versailles and at Marly.

Ladies were allowed to take still greater liberties. The Princesse d'Harcourt, a *protégée* of Madame de Maintenon's, cheated openly and habitually, even at Marly and in the presence of the Duchess of Burgundy. At the end of a game she would remark complacently that there must always be some mistakes at cards, and offer to restore any money she had won unfairly, on condition that others did the same to her.

With some the passion for cards amounted almost to a mania. Mme. de Clérambault cared for little else in life. One superb day at Pontchartrain, on the way back from Mass, she stopped on the bridge that leads into the gardens, turned slowly round in all directions, and then said, 'For to-day I think I have had exercise enough. Ho, bien! Let us hear no more about walking, but sit down to cards at once.' Thereupon she produced a pack of cards, only broke off the game for a short interval to eat a meal, and was indignant when the company left her at 2 A.M.

Games of skill were less popular than games of chance, but billiards always had its votaries. The king himself was an accomplished player, and it was Chamillart's proficiency at the game that first won him the royal favour and laid the foundations of his subsequent fortune. Even bishops did not despise the cue. The Bishop of Langres, after being beaten by Vendôme and his brother, the Grand Prieur, and losing heavily to them (for he was a great gambler), retired to his diocese for six months to practise the game in private. When he felt himself thoroughly proficient he returned to Court, where he was at once challenged to a fresh trial of skill by his former antagonists, who expected another easy and profitable victory. The bishop at first declined, saying that he had

too vivid a recollection of his former defeat; that he was, moreover, out of practice, as for the last six months he had been seeing nobody but canons and curés. Finally, however, he allowed himself to be persuaded; played intentionally badly at first, and had the stakes doubled. In the end he showed his true form, and won back much more than he had lost on the first occasion. He was, as Saint-Simon remarks drily, a man whose morals were unimpeachable but who was not designed by nature to be a bishop.

Chess, too, had its patrons. M. de Chartres, afterwards Regent, was fond of the game, and M. le Prince equally so; but he did not like being beaten. One day he was matched with an infant prodigy of thirteen, a page of the Dauphin's, and lost every game. At each defeat he relieved his feelings by taking off his wig and flinging it in the face of his youthful opponent.

The theatre occupied an important place in the world of amusement. In Louis XIV's day there was no special building at Versailles for dramatic performances or operas, and the present theatre dates from the later years of Louis XV: but Molière had performed his masterpieces in the state-rooms and on the terrace; and the *bosquets* of the garden were often the scene of those mythological and allegorical pieces which charmed the French imagination, though they seem to us insipid and tedious. But, with his renunciation of worldly pleasures, Louis ceased to be a patron of the drama. Actors and actresses had always been regarded by the orthodox as something unspeakably unclean: they were cut off from the privileges of the Church, and were with difficulty interred in consecrated ground. Louis, for a time, displayed all the prejudice of an advanced puritan against the playhouse. Semi-religious pieces, such as 'Esther' and 'Athalie,' were still performed at Saint-Cyr before a select audience;

but the Italian comedians were banished, and people who wished to enjoy their Molière or their Scarron had to journey to Paris. But the arrival of the Duchess of Burgundy brought a concession to human weakness. Comedy became once more a Court function, and theatricals one of the favourite pastimes of the royal family. And if the acting of the noble amateurs was not of the highest order, the distinction of being a spectator was much coveted.

Other amusements often had a passing vogue. At one time water parties on the canal were the rage, and the flotilla of gondolas, the gift of the Venetian Republic, was in constant demand. But the area was too limited to satisfy for long, and, though the custom was revived occasionally, it mostly languished.

More intellectual, and always fashionable, were the verbal conceits, rebuses, acrostics, and *bouts-rimés*, which gave scope either for flattery or wit. The gift of being able to turn out, impromptu, a graceful couplet or a mordant epigram was highly prized and seldom allowed to rust for want of use. Equally popular at one time were the *portraits*, word pictures of nicely balanced phrases, in which the *beaux esprits* described themselves, their friends, or their enemies. Saint-Simon was a master of the art, and, where he hates, his pictures are often all the more terrible because the hatred is disguised under an appearance of candour. Most prized, and at the same time most dangerous, was the gift of writing *chansons*, those biting and often scurrilous satires which held up the follies of the Court or the foibles of the rulers to ridicule. More than one great personage at Court vented his spleen anonymously in this way, and the king's own daughter, Madame la Duchesse, was not the least of the offenders. The innocent often suffered with the guilty in these satires, and, if a home truth was sometimes wisely and

wittily said, scandal and defamation were the usual themes.

More innocent, and perhaps quite as difficult, was the game of 'novels,' which Louis had often played in his youth with the clever nieces of Mazarin. One of the company would begin a story, and each of the others in turn would take it up and add new characters and fresh adventures. A sure memory and a lively imagination were necessary for anyone who wished to shine at this game.

In 1695 there was quite an epidemic of music. 'I hear nothing talked of at present,' wrote Madame, 'but *bémol, bécar, béfa, and bémi*, and other things of the kind which are Greek to me. But the Dauphin, my son, and the Princesse de Conti discuss them for hours at a stretch.'

Madame, who disliked most things French, disliked French music too, and had no opinion of Lulli: but her contemporaries at the Court, who were national in their tastes, thought otherwise; and then, and for many years to come, Lulli held the field against all rivals. Melodious but somewhat thin, with pretty, plaintive cadences and graceful rhythms, his music reflects perfectly the attitude of his time towards art. There is no appeal to the deeper emotions; no echo of the harmonies of sea, or plain, or forest; no attempt to grapple with the sterner problems that underlie human life. Elegant, smooth, and tuneful, it suited well the words to which it was wedded, and served as a model for the airs to which accomplished lovers set their quaint conceits in verse.

Other forms of amusement may be dismissed with a word. Tennis and *mail* had been favourite games with the king in his youth; but the heavy and elaborate style of dress which came into fashion in the latter half of the seventeenth century discouraged active exercise. The

Duchesse de Berry, 'whose hands were strong as a man's,' was an accomplished driver, and driving had become the fashion; but the want of good roads must seriously have detracted from the pleasure, and it was not uncommon for the heavy coaches, in which the ordinary journeys were made, to be overturned or stuck fast in the mud almost outside the royal gates. Cold winters, such as those of 1696 and 1718, brought skating: victories (and they were few and far between in the closing years of the reign), and important events in the royal family circle, were celebrated by fireworks which drew large crowds from Paris. It happened in 1704 that the news of the battle of Blenheim became public at the very time when the birth of the Duc de Bretagne, the King's great-grandson, was to be celebrated by a pyrotechnic display. The weather, however, became threatening, and the men who were looking after the fireworks began to cover them up. A passer-by, seeing them spreading a canvas over the rockets to keep them dry, cried, 'What are you doing there?' One of the men replied promptly, 'We're packing up the *feu-de-joie* to send it to the Emperor of Austria. We have no use for it here.'

Such, in brief outline, were the ways in which the Court sought amusement. But, in spite of its gorgeous setting and its studied attempts at gaiety, life at Versailles and Marly was deadly dull. No doubt, for a few years, while each fresh experience had the charm of novelty, youth might find a feverish pleasure in the pageantry of court ceremonial or the idle dissipations of a rich and a decadent society. But nothing can permanently compensate for the absence of a serious purpose in life. And, when once a thinking man had divined beneath the glitter the petty jealousies and sordid intrigues that were the groundwork of court life, he could

hardly fail to be oppressed at times with a sense of the hollowness and futility of his existence. At least on summer evenings, when the day dies slowly and the mind is peculiarly susceptible to sombre impressions, the vision of the great palace, rising white and ghost-like above the foliage of the garden, must have struck into many a restless heart something of the chill of a prison or a tomb, and Versailles must have seemed, in the twilight, the concrete embodiment of that weariness and monotony which were paralysing life and drying up its springs.

Perhaps the men and women who felt their futility most keenly were not always able to fathom its cause. They realised, vaguely, that life had failed to satisfy; but they did not consciously formulate the idea that it failed because it was divorced from its proper interests. The habit of quarrelling with the conditions of one's life is a comparatively modern one; and the French were always more inclined than ourselves to take their rulers on trust. Affection for the person of the monarch was considered as natural and inevitable as affection for parents: to be without it was to lack one of the elementary qualities of man—a defect to be carefully concealed at all costs. Doubtless there was often much insincerity in the ostentatious sympathy that was lavished on the king's most trifling ailments; but it is important to remember that devotion to the royal person was regarded so much in the light of a duty that, with the best people, it became a reality. They might question the king's wisdom in individual instances; but his general goodness was beyond dispute. And Louis had enmeshed them in an artificial system which required the sacrifice of their best activities. They made the sacrifice, almost unconsciously, and seldom had serious doubts about the perfection of the system. He demanded their persons as an accessory to his state: they

crowded his palace and helped to decorate his rooms with their picturesque figures. He claimed that they should cut themselves off from the most stimulating interests of their class: they obeyed, and were content to figure as 'supers' in the drama of which he was playing the heroic part. If they found life under these conditions intolerable, they seem only to have known of two remedies: one was to drown thought and conscience in debauch; the other to renounce the world and stake their all upon a future life. Not a few of the better natures withdrew betimes from the allurements and temptations of Versailles to the convent cell, the hair shirt, and the fasts and vigils of an ascetic life. Even the gay and frivolous, caught suddenly by that fear of death and the hereafter to which sensual natures are peculiarly susceptible, ended their days in prayer and penance. But nobody seems to have thought of breaking new ground, of remodelling his life and serving God by serving man. The needs of France were great: the poor were growing poorer, their sufferings more acute. But the members of the *ancienne noblesse*, though they often realised and deplored the misery, had no impulse as yet towards practical philanthropy, no idea that on their own estates there were problems to be worked out, which would restore to life the interest that it lacked. Louis had hypnotised them. They had lost the power of envisaging life otherwise than as he had conceived it for them. They had no strength to escape from the artificial world in which he had entangled them and face realities for themselves. And it was this want of initiative in its noble families, almost as much as the unwisdom of its rulers, which doomed France to the agonising upheaval of the Great Revolution.

CHAPTER III

MANNERS AND CUSTOMS

Discomfort — Disease — Doctors — Conversation — Practical Jokes — Pride — Mésalliances — Eccentrics — Religion — The Black Arts — Death.

JUDGED by our standards of to-day, life in the Palace of Versailles was lacking in many of the most elementary requisites of comfort. There were spacious rooms, sumptuous furniture, and gorgeous decoration, but few or none of those quiet nooks in which the taste of the occupier finds individual expression, and which are dedicated to solitude or the intimacy of private friendships. Everything was sacrificed to the state-apartments, and in the matter of privacy prince and courtier were hardly as well off as the schoolboy of the twentieth century. It is true that they did not often know our craving to be alone, nor feel the necessity of possessing some retreat of their own, some city of refuge to which they could escape from the ceaseless babble of tongues and be secure from intrusion. Like the Greeks, they felt life to be a public rather than a private affair, and abstinence from company was either a self-imposed penance or an involuntary hardship. They had too what we lack—a real taste for ceremony and public representation. The theatrical side of life was cultivated at the expense of the family side, with the result that social qualities came to be prized almost more highly than domestic virtues.

But there were some who found the eternal publicity

of life a burden, and who longed to be alone. Madame de Maintenon was always glad to escape to Saint-Cyr from the dull chamber at Versailles in which she slept and dressed and ate, and which she never had to herself till the king had bidden her good night at ten in the evening. At Marly, by special favour, she was allowed the undivided enjoyment of two tiny rooms, which, with a touch of unconscious pathos, she christened *le Repos*; but they were so cold and draughty as to be uninhabitable in the winter months. 'I had come to *le Repos*,' she wrote to the Duc de Noailles in the February of 1711, 'to write to you at leisure, but I have been driven away by the cold. I am sure you don't want to be the death of me.' Others had to content themselves with little closets and cupboards contrived out of boards or screens at the back of their bedrooms. A few were able to satisfy their craving by turning the passages and staircases that ran behind the state-rooms into cramped suites of private apartments. The *petits cabinets* of Marie Antoinette exist to this day, and show with how little of real comfort a queen of France was forced to be content.

Nor was the standard of personal cleanliness a high one. The appliances for washing were inadequate and primitive. The heavy clothes which fashion imposed were no doubt a welcome protection against cold; but they must have made all physical exertion heating, and their number and complexity rendered changing a lengthy and troublesome process. Moreover, the extraordinary head-dresses affected by the women did not conduce to frequent brushing of the hair. When once a lady had had her locks combed and pomaded into the required shape, her chief ambition in life was to keep the structure undisturbed. When the Duchesse du Maine was married, in 1692, Madame de Maintenon observed that 'she was completely weighed down by her gold and jewellery, and

that her *coiffure* alone weighed more than the rest of her person!' Strong scents were called in to obviate the results of an insufficient use of soap and water, but, to quit an unpleasant subject, the remedy was not always successful. It is not surprising therefore to find that the aristocracy suffered occasionally in a way that is fortunately now confined to the dirtiest of our poor. 'The Queen of Spain,' writes Madame in 1701, 'was nearly devoured by bugs on the Spanish galleys. They had to sit up with her for several nights.' And again, from the Palace of St. Cloud in 1719, she laments: 'Everybody is complaining of the great heat and the cursed bugs; they tortured me the whole night long. The Princess of Wales writes to me that all London is complaining of them, and the Queen of Sicily says that she found her bed simply covered with these pests.'

Sanitation, as a science, was not even in its infancy. No doubt the size of the rooms, coupled with the draughts that resulted from large chimneys and long corridors, was conducive to health; but the French of the eighteenth century had none of the Dutch passion for cleanliness. Pet dogs were often permitted to turn the private apartments into something little better than a kennel; rubbish was allowed to accumulate; and courtyards and streets were regarded as the natural dumping-ground for offal. Paris enjoyed a peculiarly unsavoury reputation, and the Palace of Versailles itself was often infected with foul smells; indeed, it was no uncommon thing for slops to be thrown from the upper windows into the courts below, and, at a later period, Marie Antoinette narrowly escaped a sousing from the windows of Madame du Barry.

Under these circumstances epidemic diseases were frequent and virulent; typhoid and diphtheria, it is true, do not seem to have been prevalent; but, by way of compensation, measles often assumed a very malignant form,

and, in 1712 especially, claimed many distinguished victims, old and young. But by far the most dreaded scourge was small-pox. Few escaped it entirely, and it was responsible for more deaths than any other form of illness. Bleedings, closed curtains, and a rigorous exclusion of fresh air, were the recognised treatment, and the Prince d'Espinoy was supposed to have died from having his sheets changed before he was entirely convalescent—a belief which throws a grim light on the horrors of the sick-chamber. Even if the patient recovered he was generally marked for life. Versailles was full of people of both sexes who had been thus disfigured, and this fact lent the disease a special terror in a Court where beauty was as much prized as talent. Nevertheless, a desire to tend the sick generally proved stronger than fear, and a patient seldom died for want of voluntary nurses, who made up in devotion what they lacked in skill.

The rate of infant mortality was terribly high, even amongst those children who were most carefully watched and guarded. Louis XIV lost five children out of six, and the Duc de Bourgogne two out of three ; and every parent expected to lose a fair proportion of his children in infancy. But the fittest survived, and when once the critical period was passed the *ancienne noblesse* seems to have possessed extraordinary vitality. It is impossible not to be struck by the large number of people who are said by Saint-Simon to have died at a ripe old age in full possession of their faculties. Freschère, lieutenant-general of artillery, was still serving at eighty, and the Maréchal de Duras broke in horses at the same age. La Rablère, a teetotaller, lived to be eighty-seven, and Du Chesne, who supped nightly off lettuces and champagne and wished others to follow his *régime*, died at ninety-one. Nor were the ladies less vigorous. Madame de Puysieux, who had a peculiar habit of chewing her veils and *fichus* and was

supposed to have spoiled in this way a hundred thousand francs worth of Genoa lace, died at eighty '*avec toute sa tête*,' the Duchesse de Verneuil at eighty-two, and Mme. de Villars, mother of the marshal, at eighty-five; and it would be easy to multiply instances almost indefinitely.

But long life did not always imply robust health; indigestion, sometimes called frankly by its proper name at others disguised under the more mysterious title of 'the vapours,' was extremely common, and was nearly always the result of over-eating. 'I eat too little now,' wrote Madame de Maintenon once, 'to suffer from dyspepsia.' Others were less abstemious. Smoking is not, perhaps, an attractive habit, but it does at least counteract a craving for sweets and prevents those frequent snacks that are so fatal to health. The gentlemen at the Court of Versailles did not smoke, but they ate a great deal between meals. Sweets, pastry, and preserved fruits, were in constant demand. The Duc de Lauzun always kept a table covered with fruit and cakes, beer, cider, lemonade, and ate and drank at all hours of the afternoon. But these extras were not allowed to interfere with the serious business of the dinner or supper table. The king himself was an enormous eater. 'I have often seen him,' says Madame, 'eat four plates of soup, a whole pheasant, a partridge, a large plate of salad, mutton *au jus* or *à l'ail*, two big slices of ham, a whole plateful of pastry, and, besides these, fruit and hard-boiled eggs.' There were not many who could ply quite so good a knife and fork, but the average standard of surfeit was a high one. The Grand Dauphin and many others were much addicted to fish. Now fish had to travel far from the coast, and the means of transport were not rapid. The eighteenth century, adapting its tastes to its limitations, preferred its fish high, and often ate it in a condition which would inspire us with positive disgust. The result was that indigestion

sometimes took a very severe form which was not easily distinguishable from apoplexy, and that gastric ulcers were common. Nor is it surprising that, from the king downwards, these hearty eaters were frequently prostrated by gout. Few reached old age without a visit to the waters of Bourbon, and the evening of life was often harassed by an operation for stone, performed with imperfect instruments and without anæsthetics.

The danger of any serious illness was aggravated by the incompetence of the doctors. It is indeed astonishing that anybody ever survived the unscientific but drastic treatment that was meted out to the suffering body. Molière had poked fun at the medical profession in *Le Malade imaginaire*, where the aspirant for honours, questioned as to the proper treatment of various diseases, is made to repeat the eternal refrain, 'Clysterium donare, postea seignare, ensuita purgare.' And at the beginning of the eighteenth century the science of medicine had hardly progressed beyond this formula. Only, a new terror had been added to illness by the practice of giving emetics by way of first aid to the suffering. Perhaps in cases of ordinary surfeit the remedy was suited to the disease; but in more complicated illnesses the treatment was both exhausting and painful, and there can be little doubt that the death of the Duc de Berry was accelerated by it. Blood-letting, however, was still the chief stand-by in any crisis. Even when they were in health, many people of a full habit of body had themselves bled at regular intervals. The operation was usually performed on the arm, and the failure to sterilise the instruments sometimes led to serious results. Saint-Simon, after being treated by Le Drau, a famous Paris surgeon, in this way, suffered from an abscess which swelled his arm to the size of a bolster, and was only saved by the skilful surgery of Maréchal. In cases of

serious illness the patient was expected to shed his blood like water. Madame avers that, when the body of her cousin, de la Trémoille, was opened after death, not a drop was found left in his veins. Even children were not spared, but were subjected to the treatment at the mature age of three months—a practice which helps to account for the high rate of infant mortality; and Louis XV, when attacked by measles as a child, probably owed his life to the fact that, while the doctors were busy bleeding and drugging his elder brother to death, his governess carried him off, kept him snugly in bed, and fed him up with warm wine.

The most famous doctor of the day was Fagon, the king's physician, a man who was remarkable in more ways than one, and who was a power at Court to be reckoned with. Those who are interested in his personal appearance will find a striking portrait of him in the Louvre; 'asthmatic, hump-backed, fleshless, delicate, and subject to epileptic fits,' is Saint-Simon's description of him. Madame is even less complimentary. 'Dr. Fagon,' she says, 'has a face which it is impossible to describe. His legs are as thin as a bird's, his mouth is choked up by the lower teeth, which are black and decayed, he has thick lips which make his mouth project, blear eyes, a dark yellow skin, a long face, and he looks as disagreeable as he really is.' But in spite of these physical defects Fagon possessed character. He was discreet, fearless, and honest, and although he failed to avert the catastrophes of 1712, he never lost the king's confidence. Abroad, he enjoyed a European reputation. In 1702 William III, who was in failing health, consulted him anonymously, and, posing as a poor curé, sent an account of his symptoms. Fagon replied bluntly that the case was hopeless, and that the patient must prepare for a speedy death. Some time afterwards William

applied to him again, but this time in his own name. The physician recognised the identity of the two cases but did not alter his opinion, only he prescribed a treatment which might prolong life, though it was powerless to cure. Fagon indeed, though he had a reputation for resourcefulness, was better at foretelling death than at saving life.

Almost equally famous, and more skilful in his own line, was Maréchal, the king's surgeon. Those who had experience of his surgery have testified to his skill and the delicacy of his touch; and he was, moreover, possessed of a sound common-sense and a moral courage which made him something of a power at Court. Louis XIV, who liked an honest man when he really knew him, held Maréchal in great esteem, and sometimes listened to his advice on matters that lay outside his profession; and, if Saint-Simon's tale is true, it was the great surgeon's intervention which, for a time, saved Port-Royal from its impending doom.

When the accredited members of the profession were so often at fault, it was natural that quacks should flourish. Generally they were only called in at the last gasp to do their best or their worst, as at the death-bed of Louis XIV; but there were some who were not mere charlatans, and who enjoyed an established reputation in spite of Fagon's sarcasms. Such a one was Helvetius, who had introduced ipecacuanha into France, and who was often consulted in cases of dysentery. Amongst his more famous patients he numbered the Duc de Beauvillier.

Enough has been said to show that, in spite of its outward brilliance, life at the French Court lacked many of the solid advantages that we enjoy to-day, and most of the requisites of health and comfort that make existence physically attractive. On the other hand, it was seasoned by an art which has almost become obsolete in our bustling age—the art of conversation.

Versailles provided all the necessary conditions—a leisured class that liked society but did not care for books, a language that was admirably adapted for clear expression or subtle shades of meaning, a national aptitude for searching criticism, and a boundless wealth of time. Unfortunately it is often impossible to translate the *bons mots* that set the whole Court laughing; not because they are untranslatable, but because, set down in plain blunt English, they shock our more refined taste. And the reason of this is not merely that the standards of the age are different, but that the French have always been an extremely logical race. They accept the body as the main factor in existence, and they accept it with all its varied functions. Perhaps we are inclined to err on the side of fastidiousness: the convention that permits a man to talk of a pain in the head, but not of one in the liver, is not logically defensible. But on the other hand excessive frankness has its drawbacks, and, in the eighteenth century, certainly made it difficult for quite good people to recognise the line where plain speaking ended and obscenity began.

Wit rather than humour was the characteristic of the art and was often of a distinctly savage character. Epigram, pointed and generally personal, made conversation sparkle, and was sometimes carried into the most serious phases of life. '*Chaque péché de cette dame,*' cried the Abbé de Gobelin of Mme. de Coulanges, whom he had been preparing for confession—'*chaque péché de cette dame est une épigramme!*' But the quality which gave French wit its special savour, and which often shocked the foreigner, was its quiet and sustained irony. Nothing was safe from 'the solemn sneer.' '*Ma tante, on se moque de tout ici!*' cried the poor little Duchess of Burgundy to Madame de Maintenon; and the phrase was no exaggeration. A shrewd and somewhat

cynical observation of men and manners, usually coupled with a complete absence of reverence for anything but birth, was an almost necessary qualification for one who wished to gain the ear of the *salons*. Knowledge was of less importance, and many of the most famous and polished talkers possessed less general information than is expected from the average board-school child of to-day. Indeed, the ignorance of the 'educated' classes was at times unfathomable. When the Duc de Gramont was supposed to be dying they read to him the story of the Passion. He had never heard it in French before, and consequently it came upon him with all the force of novelty. When they reached the passage where 'they all forsook him and fled' he began to cry, and exclaimed: 'Ah! the traitors! But why did he take rascals and common people like fishermen for his followers? Why didn't he choose Gascon noblemen?'

A gentleman's education was usually considered complete when he had acquired a knowledge of the pedigrees of the noble families and an adequate comprehension of the forms and ceremonies to be observed at Court or on official occasions; into other branches of learning he was seldom invited to penetrate far. And there were men who were without even this rudimentary knowledge. When, for example, Canaples succeeded his uncle, the archbishop, as governor of Lyons, he used to go about the streets giving the archiepiscopal blessing, under the impression that it was part of his own official duties. But his was a case of rather exceptional ignorance.

In the war of wit the ladies more than held their own, and were perhaps, on the whole, less ignorant than the men. Women like Madame de Maintenon, Madame la Duchesse, Mesdames de Montespan, de Caylus, de Sévigné, and a score of others, dominated quite as much through their intellectual superiority as through their personal

charms ; and the natural gallantry of the French character secured them an influence such as they would have possessed in no other European country at the time. Madame, who brought to her adopted country a truly German depreciation of her own sex, often laments in outspoken terms the ambition of Frenchwomen to control politics ; and, though her criticisms are sometimes unduly severe, her general conclusions are sound. For a ready wit and a power of shrewd observation do not necessarily imply the clear vision of political tendencies and the grip of general principles which are essential to statesmanship ; and France in the eighteenth century had much to suffer from the fact that her destinies were too often in the hands of accomplished ladies who were born to rule a *salon* but quite unfitted to steer the ship of State.

But though wit, combined with beauty, received an almost exaggerated homage from the male, and though the mutual intercourse between the sexes was clothed in gallant language that lent it a dignity and a charm, there was very little of the really chivalrous feeling which alone makes such intercourse an influence for good, no reverence for woman as woman, and above all no pity for the weak, the erring, or the eccentric. Amongst the curiosities of Versailles was a certain Mme. Panache, a little old woman with thick lips and bloodshot eyes, passionate and unprotected, a kind of semi-lunatic, over whom the ceremonies of court life exercised a strange fascination : for she was a frequent spectator at such public functions as the supper of the king and the dinners of Monseigneur and Monsieur. And this is how she was treated : 'Everyone amused himself by working her into a passion ; the princes and princesses filled her pockets with meat and stews, the juice of which trickled down her petticoats on to the floor : some would give her money, others a fillip or a pinch ; and, as she was too blind to see who had

struck her, her impotent rage was the sport of the whole Court.' Could the hooligans of our worst slums have done better?

Nor did woman always find in married life the dignity and respect which are accorded to her in every healthy society. There were, of course, model households, like those of Beauvillier, Chevreuse, and Saint-Simon; but, on the whole, the marriage tie was lightly regarded, and not a few of the great noblemen, who passed for the cream of society, reserved their courtly manners for the *salons* of their mistresses and were petty and intolerable tyrants in their own homes. Madame de Maintenon, discoursing once on the hardships of married life to her teachers at Saint-Cyr, voiced the wrongs of her sex in these words: 'Mon Dieu! what virtue a woman must have! We make no mistake when we tell our pupils that marriage brings with it great pains. Happy, if all husbands were like the one I have just mentioned' (who neglected his wife consistently for ten years), 'for, as he was never at home, his wife was at least free in her own room! But this was an exceptional case. Most husbands come home more than once in the day, and, when they come, they always make it clear that they are the masters. They come in making a hideous noise, often with I don't know how many friends, and they bring in dogs which spoil the furniture. The wife has to put up with it: she mayn't even shut a window. If her husband comes home late, she has to sit up for him; she has to dine when he pleases; in a word, she counts for nothing.'

And neglect and petty annoyances were not the only wrongs that the wife had to put up with. Ill-temper was not always unaccompanied by blows, and castigation was not made any the more palatable when the husband, like the gentleman mentioned in Madame's letters, prefaced the operation with a short prayer: 'Merciful Lord, grant

that the blow I am about to deal thy servant may correct her and make her wiser.' It is only fair to add that there were occasions when the wives hit back, and hit the harder.

Perhaps the ladies of the Court did not always do much to earn the respect of the sterner sex by superior refinement of thought and manners. The mind of the age was coarse, and the ladies shared its coarseness. The letters of Madame, who was in many ways one of the most sincere and healthy personalities of the period, are full of indecencies that are Chaucerian in their frankness; and even the Duchesse de Bourgogne, charming as she was, did not shrink from playing practical jokes on her husband which are too indelicate to be put into print. And in the minor refinements of life the ladies did not set a very high standard. 'I confess,' writes Madame de Maintenon, 'that the ladies of the present day are insupportable to me; their insane and immodest dress, their snuff, their wine, their greediness and coarseness, and their idleness, are all so contrary to my tastes that I cannot endure them.'

Snuff-taking, which, in spite of the king's disapproval, had become fashionable, was a pardonable fault; but spitting is not a pretty habit, especially when it is combined with the absent-mindedness of a Mme. d'Herfort, who, when she was playing tric-trac, so far forgot the natural order of things as to spit into the dice-box and throw the dice into the spittoon. Madame, whose old-fashioned prejudices make her a doubtful authority, especially where things Gallican are concerned, is full of complaints. The children are precocious and ill-bred; the schools where they are brought up are full of vices that make you 'shudder with horror'; and boys of nine behave like men of thirty. 'At present,' she says, 'young people pride themselves on knowing nothing. Young

La Tonnerre, who belongs to one of the best families, bows as awkwardly as a peasant fresh from the plough; to know nothing, to understand nothing, to be rude and coarse—that is the sign of good breeding at the present day.' And, though we make all allowances for exaggeration, there are many indications that the punctilious courtesy, which had once been characteristic of high life, was going sadly out of fashion. The king's daughters, especially Madame la Duchesse, set a bad example in this respect, and were once sharply called to order by the Duchesse de Guiche, at Trianon, for a piece of rudeness that was worse than plebeian; and a scene at Marly, in which the Princesse de Conti and Madame la Duchesse called each other in public respectively *sac à vin* and *sac à guenilles*, was more worthy of the Halles than of the most polished Court in Europe.

Among the men at all events, the prohibition of duelling was no doubt responsible for a greater license both in uncomplimentary speech and in practical joking. And this prohibition was no idle threat. The king was very much in earnest; and offenders were severely punished. The Comte d'Albert, for example, was sent for three years to the Conciergerie; Pertuis and the Marquis de Conflans spent nine years in prison, and were not allowed to return to the service when they were at length released. Hence repartee often became insulting; witness the scene in which the Duc de Gesvres twitted Villeroy with his humble origin. 'They were waiting for the king's *petit couvert*, grouped round the table, when Marshal Villeroy came up with the noise and arrogant air characteristic of him. "Marshal," said de Gesvres suddenly, "you and I are certainly very lucky." Villeroy, not knowing what the duke was up to, assented modestly, and tried to break off the conversation by addressing somebody else. But de Gesvres was not to be

put off, and continued his monologue: marvelled at the luck of a Villeroy in marrying a Crequy, and of his own father in marrying a Luxembourg—a piece of good fortune which had brought their fathers offices, governments, and wealth, and made their grandfathers secretaries of state. "But let us stop there, Monsieur le Maréchal," he went on: "don't let us penetrate further! For who were the fathers of these secretaries of state? Small tradesmen, like themselves: on your side a fishmonger at the Halles, and on mine a pedlar, or perhaps worse. Gentlemen," he concluded, turning to the company, "am I not justified in thinking that Fortune has been prodigiously kind to the marshal and myself?"'

Of practical jokes there was no end, and royalty did not disdain to lend a hand. Mme. de Chartres and her sisters let off petards one night outside Monsieur's windows at Trianon, till the fumes drove him from his room. The Duc and Duchesse de Bourgogne arranged a series of bombs along the avenue that led from Marly to the Perspective, where the Princesse d'Harcourt lodged. When this lady was half way up the *allée* in her sedan chair, the bombs began to explode; the porters, who were in the secret, dropped the chair and fled, and the princess was left struggling and shrieking inside, like a cat in a waste-paper basket; while the whole Court, which had been watching from a distance, hastened up to enjoy the fun.

Monsieur le Duc, at supper, gave Santeuil, the most accomplished Latin poet of his day, a glass of wine into which he had emptied the contents of his snuff-box: with the result that the unhappy scholar died within forty-eight hours in great agony. But perhaps the most successful and malicious practical jester of the Court was the Duc de Lauzun. Saint-Simon gives us many specimens of his handiwork, of which the following story is a typical example.

Châteaurenaud, a bluff sailor of the old school, who had received the marshal's *bâton* as a reward for his services, was, in private life, somewhat 'heavy in the hand,' obtuse, and destitute of conversation. He was related to Cavoye through the latter's wife, but, as Cavoye represented the pink of polite fashion, the two men had nothing in common and saw little of each other. Now Cavoye had a house at Luciennes, near Marly, to which, when the Court was at Marly, he often went with the king's permission, and where he entertained the *élite* of society. Lauzun, who was vexed at being left outside the favoured circle, got hold of Châteaurenaud one day and persuaded him that Cavoye was hurt at his never going to Luciennes; but warned him at the same time that Cavoye had a trick of receiving people coldly—a trick which was only a pose and must not be taken seriously. Châteaurenaud thanked the duke warmly for the hint, and took an early opportunity of presenting himself at Luciennes. His arrival created something like consternation, which was heightened when it became clear that the admiral had come to spend the day. But worse was in store. Two days later he reappeared at dinner-time. His hosts did what they could to make him realise that he was not wanted: but Châteaurenaud knew better than to be disconcerted, and treated their broad hints with ponderous unconcern, as a habit of the house. He continued to bore his unhappy relatives at Luciennes, Marly, and Versailles, continually falling like a bomb into the midst of their chosen circle; and Cavoye, despairing of a remedy, submitted with a murmured 'Kismet.' The trick and its author were not discovered till many years had elapsed, and the king, when he was told the tale, 'nearly died of laughing.'

But though manners were deteriorating and the solid qualities which make a privileged aristocracy tolerable

were often wholly wanting, the *ancienne noblesse* abated no jot of its pride. Madame de Maintenon, though modest about her own claims, was convinced that rank was a divine institution; and even so shrewd a man as Saint-Simon felt for a moment that France was saved when the dukes recovered their ancient prerogatives in parliament and the *présidents à mortier* were compelled to uncover to them. And this pride sometimes degenerated into puerile vanity. Cardinal de Bouillon, banished from the Court, was staying in exile at La Ferté. 'Look well and note what you see here,' he used to say to the congregation as he left the parish church after officiating at Mass; 'a cardinal, *doyen* of the Sacred College, the first after the Pope, has been saying Mass here! That is a thing that you have never seen before and that you will never see again.'

But pride was not always strong enough to stifle the sudden impulses of the heart, and *mésalliances*, horrible and degrading as they were considered, were by no means unknown. The haughty Mlle. de Choiseul, once maid of honour to the Duchesse du Maine, married a gardener who had saved her from drowning; and, though she tried hard to get her husband ennobled, she had to remain plain Mme. Grandcolas. A sister of the Duc de la Rochefoucauld, one of the noblest of the noble, married a confidential servant, though the marriage was kept a semi-secret; and the Duc de Saint-Aignan, father of Beauvillier (the Minister of State, and governor of the Duc de Bourgogne), married, at a second venture, one of his housemaids—'a creature,' says Saint-Simon, 'of the dregs of the people.' This 'creature,' however, showed a modesty and good taste that were often wanting in the bluer blooded. She refused to come to Court or to go into society, and devoted herself exclusively to her ailing husband. It is pleasant to be able to relate that, after Saint-

Aignan's death, Beauvillier and his wife treated the widow with every consideration, and brought up her children as their own.

Occasionally the monotony of the daily routine and the daily discipline was broken by a few hours of delirious licence, when some unusual event or some sudden emotion had swept a naturally excitable people temporarily off its feet. Thus when, after prolonged suspense, the Duc de Bourgogne was born and the succession to the throne seemed secure for two generations, the happy father so far forgot himself as to kiss all the ladies present in the room indiscriminately; a valet, who was just getting into bed when the good news reached him, could think of no adequate way of expressing his feelings except to fling his clothes into the fire; and the Swiss and French guards carried the costly furniture from the rooms on the ground floor of the palace and made bonfires of it in the courts.

Such extravagant demonstrations were not of frequent occurrence; but there seems to have been something about the atmosphere of Versailles which was peculiarly favourable to imbecility. Court life always encourages a desire to be conspicuous; and it is possible for anyone to achieve notoriety by being absurd. Perhaps, too, the excessive powers which the French nobility exercised over their dependents tended to produce a want of self-restraint which easily degenerated into eccentricity. At all events, whatever may have been the cause, the Court at Versailles contained an unusual proportion of eccentrics. The Duchesse de Lesdiguières, who cared neither for writing, reading, nor cards, spent most of her day drinking tea or coffee. When she drank tea, her ladies-in-waiting had to dress in Indian fashion; when she turned her attention to coffee, they were expected to attire themselves *à la Turque*; and the frequent change of dress often reduced them to despair. Mme. de Saint-Herem was

mortally afraid of thunder. Whenever a storm came on she used to crawl under her bed and make her servants arrange themselves on it in a pyramid, in order that, if the lightning fell, it might exhaust its power for harm on them before reaching her. But her other contrivances were not always so harmless. Once she was bathing in the river at Fontainebleau, and, as the water was rather cold, she had a quantity boiled on the bank and poured round her in mid-stream, with the result that she was badly scalded, and had to take to her bed for some time.

The Princesse d'Harcourt, who has already been mentioned, was a noted eccentric. Besides being filthily dirty in her personal habits, she was a difficult mistress to get on with. 'She was lodged immediately above me at Versailles,' says Madame, 'and I used often to hear her chasing the servants about the room, stick in hand. Sometimes the cane fell out of her hands and I could hear it rolling on the floor.' But on one occasion the princess met her match. She had taken into her service as housemaid, a sturdy peasant-woman, to whom she meted out the same treatment that she was accustomed to apply to others. The new servant submitted for a while, but at last determined on revenge, and made her preparations with great deliberation. She packed up her belongings and sent them out of the house; then she presented herself in her mistress's room at a time when she knew she would find her alone, and, unperceived, locked the door and slipped the key into her pocket. An impertinent answer provoked the expected scene, and at the first blow the servant wrenched the cane from the princess's hand and proceeded to give her a severe, but not unmerited, castigation. When justice had been done, she left her mistress screaming on the floor, let herself out of the room, double-locked the door behind her, and disappeared. The other servants, who were in the secret,

took care to be in distant parts of the house at the time. They had grievances of their own, for the princess paid her domestics badly, or not at all. They sometimes revenged themselves in an effective fashion, and twice the princess found herself stranded in the middle of Paris through the wholesale desertion of her attendants. On one occasion her carriage stopped suddenly in the middle of the Pont-Neuf, the coachman and lackeys got down from the box, her maid and *écuyer* opened the carriage-door and stepped out, and all went off laughing, leaving the princess to shift for herself. On another occasion Mme. de Saint-Simon found her wandering through the streets of Paris, alone, in full court-dress, after a similar experience. It is not surprising to hear that she changed her servants nearly every day.

Male eccentrics were equally common. Vervins, though apparently in perfect health, spent the evening of his life in bed, working at tapestry. More dangerous was the delusion of La Châtre, who would suddenly imagine himself to be surrounded by enemies and act accordingly. One of his earliest fits came upon him when he happened to be alone with the Prince de Conti, who was confined to his room with gout and unable to put a foot to the ground. In the middle of their conversation La Châtre gave a sudden cry, leapt to his feet, drew his sword, and began to attack the chairs and screens, shouting, 'There they are! help!' The prince, who was too far from the bell to ring for assistance and unable to arm himself even with a poker, expected momentarily to be run through the body, and spent what he afterwards admitted to have been the most anxious and exciting quarter of an hour of his life in utter helplessness. At last somebody came, and the lunatic was brought to reason. But in spite of this escapade La Châtre was left at large, and though, in a similar fit, he tried to leap on to the stage at Versailles

and spit the actors, he was not put under any restraint. Only, his relatives were warned to keep him under observation, and his acquaintances avoided a *tête-à-tête* with him.

Probably if any layman had seriously maintained, at the close of the eighteenth century, that the Court was suffering from a lack of religion, he would have been treated as an amusing lunatic. Preachers like Bossuet or Massillon, indeed, might thunder from the royal pulpit at the vices of the age, and even allude, in no veiled terms, to the shortcomings of the monarch himself; but, as Louis XIV observed, that was their *métier*, their official duty. They were listened to tolerantly and their professional bias discounted. On the other hand, the king could say with perfect justice, since his conversion, that never had religion been more outwardly honoured or been placed more conspicuously under royal patronage. He himself never failed to attend Mass daily, and all the members of the royal family were expected to communicate at the recognised seasons. And his example set the fashion for the Court. The misfortune was that the particular adaptation of Christianity which found favour in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries contained very little of the essential teaching of the Master, and practically excluded most of the ideas which had at first differentiated Christianity from the other religions of the world. To most it began and ended with a repetition of beliefs and the due performance of ceremonies. In the more ardent minds it was combined with a passion for uniformity which led to the persecution of the Huguenots and the suppression of Port-Royal. The *noblesse* was too profoundly imbued with a sense of its inherent superiority to be capable of understanding that in the Kingdom of Heaven the first shall be last and the last first; and a creed that was consciously regarded as a bulwark of

absolute monarchy was not likely to insist strongly on the equality of men. In the eyes even of the best people of the day the peasant was scarcely a man. He was an institution divinely appointed to pay taxes and make the earth profitable for its possessors. The Grande Mademoiselle, first cousin of the king, when, in 1658, she visited La Dombes (a small principality which was not definitely incorporated into France till 1762) was horrified at the prosperity she saw around her. 'They eat meat four times a day,' she says, 'and there are no poor. The reason is that hitherto they have paid no poll-tax. Perhaps it would be better that they should pay it, for they are idle and don't devote themselves to any work or commerce.' At the same period, in Burgundy, which had been the scene of a war between the Spanish troops under Condé and a royal army, 'you met at every turn mutilated bodies and scattered limbs; women quartered after being violated, others pierced with spits or sharp stakes.' And the unfortunate survivors, without seed to sow or implements to till the ground, were left to die of disease and starvation.

In times of peace, and until excessive taxation had ruined agriculture, the lot of the peasant was not, from a material point of view, an intolerable one. Henri IV had looked forward to a time when 'the poorest peasant in the realm would eat meat every day in the week, and have a fowl for the pot on Sunday.' But man cannot live by bread alone, and it was not till the Revolution that the labourer gained the personal liberty and the social status which alone make life a dignified or a noble thing. To the nobles of the *ancien régime* he was a necessary factor in the production of wealth, and little more, and their attitude towards him was the attitude of some modern capitalists towards native labour; to toil with the sweat of his brow for the enrichment of others was

his highest good; independence and idleness were the privilege of his superiors.

It must not be supposed that there were no souls who were moved to pity by the immensity of the suffering which war (especially that of the Fronde) or famine produced in France. St. Vincent de Paul is said to have distributed twelve million francs, worth about sixty millions at the present day, in the relief of distress, and the *Cabale des Dévots*, a secret society which enjoyed the support of the queen-mother so long as she lived, though its work was marred by sectarian prejudices, took an active part in repairing the ravages of the Fronde. But most of the contributions came from the bourgeoisie of Paris. The smaller nobles indeed had nothing left to give, and, though there were charitable souls among the gay courtiers, worldliness and indifference to the misery of the poor were the dominant note in society. Much of this indifference was no doubt due to the personnel of the Church. The humble curés, it is true, were often devoted men who led lives of quiet heroism and self-sacrifice: nor were there ever wanting men who were ready fearlessly to rebuke vice in high quarters. Père Mascaron dared, in the presence of Louis XIV, to preach a sermon against adultery, and, on another occasion, he gave still greater offence by inveighing against wars of conquest. 'I went to service yesterday,' wrote Madame de Maintenon, 'and heard a fine discourse from le Père Mascaron. He pleases the mind but does not touch the heart, and his eloquence even shocks people of good taste, because it is out of place. He spoke rather too strongly about conquest, and told us that a hero is a robber who does, at the head of an army, what rogues do for themselves unaided. Our master is displeased, but at present it is a secret.'

But however earnest the subordinates might be, they were generally hampered in their efforts by the supineness

of their chiefs. Most of the great dignitaries of the church, the cardinals, bishops, and abbés, were drawn from the privileged orders. A fat abbey or a rich bishopric was the recognised perquisite of the younger sons of great houses; and, though there were good and honest men amongst these noble prelates, they were tainted with prejudices, and, too often, with the lax morals of their class. Under the influence of Madame de Maintenon, Louis, in the later years of his reign, did indeed fill some important sees with men whose claims were based on merit and not on birth; but these appointments were regarded as surprising and almost eccentric, and were not favourably viewed by the nobility, who saw in them an encroachment on their privileges. Even the clergy of Saint-Sulpice, who, also under the influence of Madame de Maintenon, were sometimes drawn from the 'lowest of the people,' were regarded with suspicion by the fashionable world, and Saint-Simon's phrase a '*plat Sulpicien*,' marks the contempt of the aristocracy for any follower of the Carpenter of Nazareth who could not show noble quarterings.

The incredulity which was so marked a feature of the eighteenth century was as yet only in its infancy. It was still regarded as 'bad form,' and hardly extended beyond the immediate circle of the king's nephew, the Duc d'Orléans. A certain mild scepticism was pardoned in youth, but orthodoxy was almost obligatory on the aged; and the king's mistresses set an excellent example in the matter of devotion.

As might be expected in a profoundly ignorant society, there was a good deal of superstition. The king regarded Friday as an unlucky day and avoided travelling on it. Ghosts, too, exercised the fears of some. Mme. d'Heudicourt had relays of servants to sit up with her every night, and nearly died of fright when a favourite

parrot, which she had had for twenty years, was gathered to its fathers. She redoubled her guards, her *occupées* as she called them, and the impending visitation was warded off. Her son, too, was afflicted with the same terrors, and would never be alone after dark. Even Madame, the free-thinking wife of the king's brother, dabbled in the supernatural. 'It is only too true,' she wrote in 1695, 'that the dead cannot return. Three weeks before his death the Prince de Conti[1] had promised faithfully to appear to me, if it were possible, to give me news of the other world; but I have never seen him.'

But the commonest way in which society showed its belief in unseen powers was by dabbling in the black arts. Alchemists, fortune-tellers, and magicians drove a thriving trade, and played no unimportant part in the love-intrigues of the fashionable world. 'The inhabitants of mean streets in the suburbs of Paris were accustomed to the daily stir, at dawn or dusk, round certain solitary houses. People of all classes, on foot, in carriages or in sedan-chairs—the women masked or veiled—formed a queue outside a closed door which only opened at a given signal.'[2] The worst of it was that the trade of fortune-teller was too often combined with that of poisoner; but it needed the *Chambre ardente* of 1679, and the revelations of La Voisin, to convince the world at large of the extent of the malady and the danger of these practices.

Catherine Montvoisin, commonly called La Voisin, was the wife of a hosier, whose shop was situated on the Pont-Marie connecting the Ile St.-Louis with the right bank of the Seine. The husband was uniformly unsuccessful in business; the wife on the other hand made an

[1] The elder of the two princes of that name, and husband of the king's daughter by Mlle. de la Vallière.

[2] Arvède Barine, *Louis XIV et la Grande Mademoiselle.*

enormous income out of the poisons, love-philtres, and sacrilegious rites, which were her stock-in-trade. For the rich her consultations cost thousands of francs; for the poor her terms were more moderate. Among her acolytes was Mariette, a priest of the Church of Saint-Séverin, whom she employed for her blasphemous ritual. Amongst her clients was Madame de Montespan, the king's mistress and the mother of seven of his children. As early as 1668 Louis must have had a hint that his new mistress was mixed up with this criminal world. For La Voisin had imprudently accused Mariette of enticing away her clients, and justice, getting wind of the affair, had instituted an inquiry. Mariette confessed that he had recited 'passages from the Gospels' over the heads of various people, to wit, 'La dame de Bougy, Madame de Montespan, Le Duverger and M. de Ravetot, who had all been brought to him by Lesage.' But, before the inquiry had proceeded far, it was discovered that Mariette was a cousin of the wife of Le Châtelet, the judge appointed to conduct the investigation; and Le Châtelet thought it his duty to hush up the affair. Powerful influences were exerted with the same object, and Mariette and Lesage returned to their nefarious practices. We may well imagine that the king, then at the height of his infatuation, refused to believe that the beautiful and clever creature who had captured his heart was guilty of anything worse than a feminine curiosity. But the matter became more serious when, in 1680, the *Chambre ardente* threw light on the dark practices of which La Voisin had been the centre and the organiser. It was bad enough that on the list of those summoned to appear before the court there should be such celebrities as the Comtesse de Soissons, the Marquise d'Alluye, the Vicomtesse de Polignac, the Marquis de Fouquières, the Princesse de Tingoz and the Duchesse de Bouillon; but

it was worse still for the prestige of the monarchy that the names of Mlle. des Œillets, former *suivante* of the Montespan, and of Cato, her *femme de chambre* and a creature of La Voisin, should occur in compromising revelations. Guibourg, too, and Lesage gave evidence to the effect that Madame de Montespan had even planned the death of the king by poison. The inquiry was held in secret, but the king was kept fully informed of all the phases in the poignant drama; and, though the suspense lasted for months, he never once betrayed by look or gesture the anguish that must have filled his soul. In the end, either for reasons of state or because he had persuaded himself of her innocence, Louis acquitted his mistress of the greater crime. In 1682 the *Chambre ardente* was suppressed. The influential suspects escaped scot free; the smaller fry, to the number of about 150, were executed or sent to an equally certain death in prison.[1]

The secret of Madame de Montespan's real or supposed complicity was known only to a few, and was so well kept that her contemporaries never suspected it. Probably her connection with La Voisin is to be explained by a desperate resolve, first to retain, and finally to regain, by black arts, the fickle affection of her royal lover. But the disillusionment, which the knowledge of her conduct must have brought to Louis, is enough to account for his somewhat harsh treatment of her after the final rupture. Possibly, too, we may find in the incident a clue to her own excessive fear of death.

Madame de Montespan had been no sceptic. The queen had first been attracted to her by her frequent Communions and her rigid observance of religious ceremonies, an observance which was not part of a calculated

[1] La Voisin herself was burned alive on the Place de la Grève, February 22, 1680.

hypocrisy but represented a genuine, if narrow and imperfect, belief. But credulity was not the monopoly of the *dévotes*. The Duc d'Orléans, who believed neither in God nor goodness, dabbled in the black arts and had tried to see the Devil. One day, with the aid of a professional magician, he attempted, most indiscreetly, to dip into the future. Mlle. Séry, his mistress, had among her *protégées* a little girl of eight, who represented, amidst somewhat ambiguous surroundings, the innocence of childhood; she had never been to Versailles, she had never seen the royal family, and, according to Saint-Simon, she had never even left the house. She was, therefore, an admirable subject for psychical research. A glass of water was placed in her hands, the magician made a few passes over it, and she was told to look into it and describe what would happen at the king's death-bed. She did as she was bidden and 'described the king's bed-room accurately, with the furniture that was actually there at the time of his death. She described the king perfectly, in his bed, and the people who were round him or in the room; a small child (Louis XV) with the Order of the Saint-Esprit, held by Mme. de Ventadour, whom she recognised from having seen her at Mlle. Séry's house; also the Duc d'Orléans, whom she likewise knew. She then described people who were recognisable as Madame de Maintenon, Fagon, Madame, the Duchesse d'Orléans, Madame la Duchesse, and the Princesse de Conti—in a word she gave a full account of all the people she saw, princes, servants, nobles, and valets.' This happened in 1706 when the Grand Dauphin, the Duc and Duchesse de Bourgogne, and the Duc de Berry were still alive and in perfect health. The Duc d'Orléans, astonished that no mention was made of them, described their personal appearance, in turn, to the little girl, and asked if she did not see such and such a person. But she

replied consistently in the negative, and repeated what she did see.

What followed was stranger still. The duke asked if he could be told what would happen to him personally. The glass of water was removed and the necromancer offered to show him the future in a picture on the wall. After a quarter of an hour of professional business, 'there appeared suddenly on the wall a life-size picture of the duke in his ordinary dress but wearing a closed crown. This crown was neither that of France, Spain, England, nor the Holy Roman Empire, and completely mystified the duke who had never seen one like it.' It was undoubtedly intended to foreshadow the regency.

This incident was related to Saint-Simon by the duke himself shortly after it had occurred in 1706 ; and Saint-Simon is too truthful a witness to have tampered with the date or deliberately to have falsified the details, though no doubt his memory was unconsciously affected by subsequent events. But, though the story remained a puzzle to him, the explanation is not difficult, if we may suppose collusion between the necromancer and the child. It will be noticed that the Duchesse de Berry, who was actually present at the death, is not mentioned in the vision. It seems fairly obvious that the necromancer, whose object it was to flatter the duke's ambition, simply eliminated all the people who would naturally stand between him and the regency. He could not foresee that the duke's own daughter would one day marry the Duc de Berry and so be present at the closing scene in 1715. The innocence of the little girl, on which the duke laid much stress when he told the story to Saint-Simon, will impose on nobody who is accustomed to investigate psychical phenomena.

What was curiously absent from the minds of the *ancienne noblesse* of this period was any feeling for the

bodies of their dead: and indifference sometimes almost amounted to a want of reverence. There was no clinging to the mortal remains, no sentiment over the house of clay when the spirit had departed; and etiquette, which forbade a superior to do honour to his inferior in rank, prevented even parents from following their children to the grave. The royal practice on these sad occasions is instructive. When the end was imminent the carriages were ordered, and Louis would hurry from the death-chamber to a change of scene and surroundings. The corpse was left to those whose official duties made it their charge. Custom had much to do with this seeming callousness, and the severely logical nature of the French gave a sanction to custom. And if there was no sentiment over the dead body there was also little sense of the pathos or even of the horror of death. The funeral service was not a last and touching parting with the dead, a committing of the beloved body into the hands of the Almighty, but a social function where claims of precedence and rival jealousies were as freely vented as at a wedding or a state reception.

The Bourbons had their last official resting-place in the vaults of St.-Denis: but their bodies (unless the nature of the final illness made the operation unwise) were opened and the more perishable parts removed and embalmed, the heart, in the case of many, being placed in the Val de Grâce. These grim relics were sealed up in urns and conveyed by hand to their final destination, and the distinction of bearing them was highly valued. When the first Duc de Bretagne died in infancy in 1705, Cardinal de Coislin carried the heart in a carriage on his knees. A somewhat horrible scene was witnessed at the funeral of Mlle. de Montpensier, the king's first cousin. Either the embalming had been imperfectly carried out, or else the urn, in which the relics were

placed, was insufficiently sealed; for 'in the middle of the service the urn, which had been deposited on a credence, exploded with a loud report,' and the intolerable smell which resulted sent the congregation, priests heralds and spectators, flying in a struggling mass to the doors. It is significant that Saint-Simon records the event as a humorous episode.

CHAPTER IV

SOME CELEBRITIES AT THE COURT

Princes of the Blood—M. le Prince—M. le Duc—The Prince de Conti—Lauzun—Cavoye—Langlée—Samuel Bernard—De la Rochefoucauld—The Maréchale de Villeroy—Beauvillier and Chevreuse—Vatteville.

THOUGH the sayings and doings of the king and his family formed the principal interest of Court life, and though the individual courtier was condemned to play a very subordinate *rôle*, there were, nevertheless, some minor characters who attracted a fair share of the public attention and who figure prominently in the memoirs of the period. Hence, a brief notice of some of them may not be out of place here.

Foremost amongst these lesser stars were the Princes of the Blood, descendants or relatives of the great Condé who had fought for the Fronde, ravaged France in the service of Spain, and finally added lustre to the *Grand Monarque's* reign by his victories as commander of the royal forces. They were distinguished for their uncertain temper and their diminutive stature. The eldest of them, Henri-Jules de Bourbon, commonly called M. le Prince, was a small man, with dark expressive eyes and protruding lips. In his youth he had served in Flanders; but he inherited none of his father's military talents, and, even if he had been a Napoleon, the jealousy of Louis would have debarred him from a military career.

'No one,' says Saint-Simon, 'was ever endowed with a keener or more varied intelligence, which extended

even to the arts and mechanics and was combined with an exquisite taste. No one also was more frankly and naturally brave, or had a greater desire to shine; and, when he chose to please, he did so with a tact, a grace, and a courtesy, which seemed spontaneous and proved irresistible.' Cut off, however, from any useful service to the State, he frittered away his life at Court or in his own magnificent palace of Chantilly, a prince of *fêtes*, a hero of malicious practical jests, and a master of small intrigue. To his wife, who was ugly, stupid, virtuous, and patient, he was a veritable tyrant. She was hardly allowed to call her soul her own. He would make her start on a journey at a moment's notice; and often, as soon as she had seated herself in the carriage, he would order her to get out again, and postpone the intended journey for hours or days. At other times he would summon her from church, even when she was on the point of receiving the Communion; not because he needed her presence, but solely for the pleasure of exercising authority. And, if she failed to obey the summons at once, there were consequences.

He himself was always uncertain in his movements, and every day four dinners were cooked for him—one in Paris, a second at Écouen, a third at Chantilly, and a fourth wherever the Court might be at the moment. As the *menu* consisted only of soup and half a chicken on a crust of bread, the expense was not as great as might have been expected. He spent the day in transacting his private business, and made a practice of lending money to members of the Paris parliament in order that he might be sure of their support in his numerous law-suits. He rarely entertained at Chantilly, where his servants and a few learned Jesuits kept him company. When he walked in the grounds, he was followed by four secretaries to whom he dictated, on the spot, any ideas

that occurred to him for the improvement or embellishment of his estate. Though furiously jealous of his wife, he claimed a large amount of liberty for himself, and once fell madly in love with the Marquise de Richelieu, a lady of many attractions and no character. Finding that he had a successful rival in the person of the Comte de Roucy he reproached his mistress fiercely with her treachery, and she, fearful of losing so rich a lover, proposed at once to give the count a *rendezvous* and have him assassinated by the prince's men. It is to the credit of the prince that he was so horrified at the suggestion that he informed De Roucy of the plot and never saw the marquise again.

During the last fifteen or twenty years of his life his eccentricity was hardly distinguishable from madness. One morning he called on the Maréchale de Noailles, at the moment when her bed was being made and nothing was wanting but the counterpane. He paused for a second at the door and then, crying in ecstasy, '*Oh! le bon lit, le bon lit!*' he took a run, jumped on to the bed, and rolled over seven or eight times. Then he got down and apologised, without a trace of embarrassment, saying that the bed looked so clean and so beautifully made that he had been unable to restrain an impulse to 'wallow' in it. He also developed a habit of barking like a dog, regardless of the feelings of those around him: only, when the fit seized him in the presence of the king, he showed his respect for royalty by putting his head out of window and barking into space.[1] Finally gout and fever carried him off. During his last illness he insisted that he was already dead and refused all nourishment on the ground that the dead do not eat. Finot, his doctor, was at his wit's end, till at last he hit upon the happy idea of maintaining that dead people do occasionally eat; and in

[1] He also took to weighing everything that entered his body.

support of his contention he offered to produce concrete examples. The pretended dead, after being duly coached, were ushered into the room, and, for the remaining weeks of his life, the prince consented to take food; but only in the company of his fellow-corpses.

Almost his last conscious act was to torment his wife by refusing to send for a priest, though in reality he had been seeing Père La Tour secretly for several months. The prince had proposed that La Tour should come in disguise; but this the priest resolutely declined to do. However, to humour the patient, he paid his visits at night, and was conducted to the prince's room by secret passages and private doors. M. le Prince died in Paris in 1709 at the age of sixty-six.

He was succeeded by his son, Louis duc de Bourbon, commonly known as M. le Duc. This prince had inherited some of his father's talents and most of his temper. 'He had great qualities,' says Mme. de Caylus, 'but was brutal.' His trick on Santeuil, which cost the scholar his life, has been already mentioned; but two other instances of his playful disposition may be quoted here. He possessed at Saint-Maur, in the neighbourhood of Paris, a small country house to which he was in the habit of paying flying visits. On one occasion he had gone there for a night with five of his most intimate friends, amongst whom was the Comte de Frèsque. At supper a dispute arose between the count and his host over some historical fact. De Frèsque, who was clever and well-read, maintained with some warmth that his own version was right; the duke was equally positive that it was wrong, and, finding that argument was useless, he finally threw a plate at the head of his guest and kicked him out of the house. De Frèsque, who had come to stay the night and had sent away his carriage, was obliged to beg for shelter at the curé's house and

returned to Paris early the next morning. The quarrel lasted for some time but was at length made up, and, during De Frèsque's last illness, the duke waited on him like a servant.

If his friendship was dangerous, his enmity was still more to be feared. A supper of 'young bloods' in Paris, at which he had been present with the Prince de Conti, had ended in some disorderly scenes. News of what had happened somehow reached the ears of the king, who gave the two princes a severe reprimand. M. le Duc suspected that Termes, one of the *premiers valets de chambre*, was the informer, and he determined to have his revenge. One night, at Versailles, as Termes was leaving the rooms of M. le Grand at 1 A.M., he was set upon by five tall Suisses armed with sticks, who beat him for the whole length of the gallery. Termes had to take to his bed for several days, but the names of his assailants were never officially discovered.

In 1685 M. le Duc married Mlle. de Nantes, the pretty, clever, but malicious daughter of Louis XIV and Madame de Montespan. By this marriage he gained a large pension, the governorship of Burgundy, and all the private *entrées*, including that of the king's cabinet after supper. He thus secured precedence over his own father, and little love was lost between the two. But of political influence he possessed no jot. He lived on good terms with his wife, though he never enjoyed either her affection or esteem, and died in the spring of 1710. He had been suffering for some time from pains in the head and occasional fits, which he endeavoured to keep secret; and, in answer to the earnest entreaties of his mother that he would think of his soul, he had promised to turn over a new leaf, but not till after the Carnival, at which he intended to have a last fling. On the Monday evening, as he was driving home over the Pont-Royal from the

Hôtel Coislin, he was seized with a fit and carried in an unconscious state to his bedroom in the Hôtel Condé. The doctors bled and physicked him; but, though he made horrible faces, he never recovered consciousness and died at 4 A.M. on Shrove Tuesday.

'He was,' says Saint-Simon, 'much smaller than the smallest of men, and, without being fat, he was stout all over. His head was abnormally large, and his expression positively alarming. He was well read, intelligent, and had received an excellent education. . . . He had neither the avarice, the injustice, nor the meanness of his ancestors, . . . but he had all their malignity and more than their skill in usurping privileges by subtle intrigue.'

He was succeeded by his son, the Duc d'Enghien, who took his father's title of M. le Duc. It was this prince whose eye was shot out through the carelessness of the Duc de Berry; but his life's work belongs to the Regency and the earlier years of Louis XV, under whom he held for a while the office of *premier ministre*.

The younger branch of the Condés was known by the name of Conti. There were many princes of that name, of whom two deserve mention here. They were brothers, and nephews of the great Condé.

The elder, Louis-Armand de Bourbon, married Mlle. de Blois (the legitimised daughter of Louis XIV and Mlle. de la Vallière), who was the most beautiful woman of her day till she was partially disfigured by small-pox. The husband caught the infection from his wife and died at Fontainebleau in 1685 at the age of twenty-five, leaving no issue.

His younger brother, François-Louis de Bourbon, had a longer and more adventurous career. A pleasing face and a charming courtesy, which was lavished alike on the cabinet minister and the lackey, made him a universal favourite. He had, moreover, a cultured mind, a quick

intelligence, and a talent for conversation. Unfortunately this pleasing exterior concealed some grave moral defects. But the prince sinned gracefully, and even when drunk he remained a gentleman. 'Le Prince de Conti,' wrote Madame, 'is very funny when he is drunk. On such occasions he thinks that it is somebody else who has been drinking. Last year at an *appartement* I found him in a very exalted state. He came up to me and said, "I have just been talking to the Papal Nuncio: he reeks of wine and is completely intoxicated. I am afraid he won't be able to remember all the pretty things I have said to him, for he is too drunk." And with that he began to sing and laugh and pay me compliments, all in the same breath. "But, my cousin," said I with a laugh, "are you sure that it isn't *you* who have been drinking? You certainly seem very merry." "Why!" he exclaimed, "you are making exactly the same mistake as Monseigneur, M. de Chartres, and the Princesse de Conti! They all think I am drunk and will not believe that it is the Nuncio." . . . And if we hadn't prevented him, he would have gone up to the Nuncio and asked him where he had been drinking.'

The Prince de Conti had been the favourite of the great Condé who liked him better than his own son; and he was generally supposed to possess some of his uncle's military genius. But he was given few opportunities of showing how far his reputation was justified. He was slightly wounded at Neerwinden, where he was serving as lieutenant-general under Luxembourg; but his services in the Hungarian army (whither he had repaired without the royal permission), though they added to his fame, deeply offended the king; and his popularity with the army was enough of itself to ruin his chances of an independent command. This neglect was the great trial of the prince's life, and though, outwardly, he bore

it philosophically, he often fretted inwardly; for he was conscious of ability and eager for fame.

He married a daughter of M. le Prince and was a *persona grata* both with his father and mother-in-law. But his affections were bestowed, not on the wife who worshipped him and whom he always treated kindly, but on the witty and beautiful daughter of the king, Mme. la Duchesse. She returned his passion with an equal fervour, and her affection survived his death; and this mutual devotion was the one romance in her hard and somewhat cruel life. M. le Duc, though he raged in secret, did not dare to break openly with his rival.

The great adventure of his life came in 1697, when, chiefly through the machinations of Polignac, he was elected King of Poland. The position was a doubtful one, for the electors were divided, and, while one party had chosen the French prince, another had proclaimed the Elector of Saxony. Conti was loth to go; the empty title of king being in his eyes but a poor compensation for perpetual exile from France and Mme. la Duchesse. But Louis insisted on his accepting the crown. The political advantages that might accrue to France were too great to be neglected, and the king was at the same time not sorry to be rid of a prince whose popularity was a continual reproach to himself. In September, when all pretexts for delay had been exhausted, Conti said good-bye to Paris and home and started for Dunkerque. The king had given him two million francs, in addition to four hundred thousand for personal expenses and one hundred thousand for his equipage. He made a bad beginning; for two thousand *louis* were scattered on the roads from a broken chest in which they were being carried. Some of the treasure was brought back to Paris, the rest went to enrich the lucky finders.

The port of Dunkerque was watched by an enemy's

fleet; but, under the skilful guidance of Jean Bart, the prince gave it the slip and arrived off Dantzig on September 28. Meanwhile the Elector of Saxony had not been idle. He had entered Poland, and, putting himself at the head of his followers, had seized the capital and the royal treasure; and when the Prince de Conti at last appeared upon the scene, he found his rival in possession and his own adherents wavering. Dantzig was hostile and refused provisions for the ships, which the prince did not dare to leave. After weeks of fruitless negotiations, finding that he was unable to fulfil the lavish promises which Polignac had made on his behalf, and that the situation was hopeless, with the king's permission he abandoned an enterprise for which he had had no enthusiasm, and reached Paris again on December 12, full of amusing anecdotes and thankful to be at home once more.

Coldly received at Versailles and at Marly, the prince was always a welcome guest at Meudon, the favourite residence of Monseigneur, and was one of the privileged few who were allowed to pay their homage to Mlle. Choin. He had been brought up as a child with Monseigneur; and, though the two were very unlike in their interests and capacities, early associations had formed a lasting bond between them. But the Prince de Conti did not extend his friendship to all the inmates of Meudon, and Vendôme and his brother, the Grand Prieur, were on his black books. The sudden rise of Vendôme to fame, and his much-advertised though somewhat apocryphal success in Italy, excited the jealousy of the neglected general; while the coarse and insolent manners of the favourite converted jealousy into loathing. But, for some years, to question Vendôme's ability was to offend the king, and Conti's outspoken criticism of the strategy of the campaign of Oudenarde brought down upon his head a public reprimand.

On one occasion the smouldering embers of resentment were fanned, for a moment, into a sudden flame. The prince was playing cards at Meudon with the Grand Prieur, and a dispute arose over some point in the game. The quarrel became envenomed; the Grand Prieur was insolent, and the prince, losing his self-control, called him a cheat and a coward. Thereupon the Grand Prieur flung down the cards, and, leaping to his feet, challenged his opponent to a duel. The prince replied calmly that his movements were well known and that he could always be found. At this moment Monseigneur, who had been hastily summoned, rushed into the room in his dressing-gown and put an end to the fracas for the time being; but on the following morning, lest worse should befall, he informed the king of what had happened. It was Louis' settled policy to trample upon duellists, and he seldom made exceptions. The Grand Prieur was arrested and sent to the Bastille, where he languished until his head had had time to cool. He was ultimately released, through the earnest efforts of his friends and the intercession of the Prince de Conti himself.

In 1709 came the chance for which the Prince had waited so long. Louis had tried one general after another, and they had all failed him. At length, in desperation, he fell back upon the man who had been long pointed out by public opinion as the most fitted to lead, and the Prince de Conti was informed that he would command the troops in Flanders in the coming campaign. But it was too late. Gout and dropsy, aggravated by the irregularities of his life, carried him off at the early age of forty-five, and he died on February 21, 1709, in full possession of his faculties up to the very end.

M. le Duc, who had borne him little love in life, saw in his corpse a useful pawn for enhancing the status of the Princes of the Blood. Many and varied were the

stratagems he employed to inveigle the dukes, his peers, into some act of respect for the dead which would imply a difference of rank. His final effort is perhaps worth recording. Wherever the princes had a right to use arm-chairs, the dukes claimed and received a similar privilege. When, however, they arrived at the church where the funeral was being held, they found to their indignation that, whereas three such chairs had been provided for the three Princes of the Blood, they themselves were expected to sit on benches. In answer to their expostulations M. le Duc replied that there were no more arm-chairs in the church, and that it was impossible to obtain others. Whereupon the three senior dukes exclaimed that they would immediately leave the church with all their peers; but, as they were proceeding to carry out their threat, M. le Duc suddenly discovered that there were a number of the necessary chairs at the back of the church; and a catastrophe was avoided. So little did the solemnity of death interfere with the perpetual struggle for place and precedence.

Among the celebrities of the Court who were pointed out to the new-comer, there was none whose career had been so full of incident as the Duc de Lauzun's. He is, indeed, a standing illustration of the truth that fact is stranger than fiction. The younger son of a noble Gascon family, and known in his early days as the Marquis de Puygilhem, he came to Court in 1647, at the age of fourteen, unburdened with money or scruples and determined to push his way to the front. His cousin, the Maréchal de Gramont, took charge of him, and he received the education of a gentleman; that is to say, he learned to fence, to ride, to dance, and to make pretty speeches to a lady. The woman[1] who loved him almost

[1] The Grande Mademoiselle, daughter of Gaston Duke of Orleans, who was the brother of Louis XIII.

frantically has described him thus: 'He is a small man, but nobody can deny that he has a most pleasing and upright figure. His legs are well turned; his hair is scanty, fair, but tinged with grey, badly brushed and often greasy; he has fine blue eyes, which are generally bloodshot; a distinguished air and a pleasing expression. His smile is charming. The tip of his nose is pointed and red. . . . He is very slovenly in his dress; when he takes pains he looks very well. There is the man!' His character corresponded with his exterior: he was sharp as a needle but wanting in self-control, brave but incapable of gratitude, malicious, ambitious, and insolent. But, with all his faults, he had an insinuating manner which few women could resist; and, though essentially ignorant, he was witty and a master of repartee. 'Nobody,' said a minister's wife affectedly, 'has such a harassing time as the man who holds the handle of the saucepan.' 'Except,' said Lauzun, 'the people who are in the pot.' There was, too, in him a vein of originality, which often became mere eccentricity. He would sometimes array himself in a dressing-gown with his mantle thrown over it, a full-bottomed wig with a nightcap on the top, and a plumed hat to crown all; and in this costume he would walk up and down his rooms to see if any of the servants dared to laugh at him: and woe to the knave who even smiled!

With his quick wits he was not slow in making his way at Court, admired by the women, disliked but feared by the men. But his most astonishing triumph was the conquest of the king. Lauzun became the first and only favourite that Louis XIV ever had. Supple, almost abject flattery was largely responsible for his success. It tickled Louis' vanity to receive the unquestioning homage of a man who was ordinarily so clever and so disagreeable, and he was so confident of deserving it that

for many years he failed to discover that this lavish devotion was not sincere. At twenty-four Lauzun was given a regiment, and at thirty-six he was promised the important post of *grand maître de l'artillerie*. But the promise was to be kept a profound secret until after a council meeting, when the moment had arrived for its official announcement. On the appointed day Lauzun arrived early outside the council chamber, and in the fulness of his heart confided to Noyert, one of the *premiers valets de chambre*, the honour that was in store for him. Noyert looked at his watch and saw that there was still time; then, making a hurried excuse, he withdrew, and rushed up to Louvois' room, four stairs at a time. Louvois, who was Minister of War and no friend of the favourite, in whom he found an obstacle to his ambitions, determined to act promptly. He made his way to the council chamber and, on the pretext of urgent business, drew the king into the embrasure of a window where they could talk without being heard. There he implored Louis to reconsider his intentions, pointing out that it would be fatal to efficiency in the service if the *grand maître de l'artillerie* were out of touch with the Minister of War, and that he, personally, was incapable of working harmoniously with Lauzun. Louis, piqued at the betrayal of his secret, replied that nothing had yet been definitely settled; and with this answer Louvois went away satisfied. Shortly afterwards the council meeting broke up. Lauzun, who had seen Louvois enter and return, but who was blissfully ignorant of the nature of his errand, was waiting impatiently outside. When, however, the king came out, he passed the favourite without making the expected announcement, and Lauzun went back to his rooms discomfited. In the evening, at a private audience, Louis explained awkwardly that there had been a hitch and that Lauzun must be content to

wait a little longer. Disappointed and angry but determined to have his way, the favourite appealed to Madame de Montespan. For some reason not wholly intelligible, Lauzun had a considerable hold over this lady. Some have supposed that she had been his mistress; but it is equally possible that he knew of certain incidents in her life which she was anxious to keep secret, notably her relations with La Voisin, the famous poisoner and priestess of the black arts. Madame de Montespan gave him fair words; but the fair words produced no tangible results, and, as the days slipped by, Lauzun began to suspect that his fickle friend was playing him false. With the connivance of a chambermaid he hid himself in Madame de Montespan's room, and overheard a conversation between the mistress and her royal lover which confirmed his suspicions. Furious at the deception which had been practised upon him, he took the first opportunity of attacking Madame de Montespan, called her by names of which 'liar' was the least offensive, and loaded her with reproaches and threats. Two days later he had a similar scene with the king, declared that he would never serve a king who perjured himself for a harlot, drew his sword, and broke it across his knee. Louis was equal to the occasion. He turned, and threw the cane he was carrying through the open window, saying that he would be sorry to have struck a man of quality. And with these words he left the room.

Two months at the Bastille were the punishment for this outbreak, but at the end of that time Lauzun was back at Court and, to the amazement of all beholders, completely re-established in the royal favour. Nor was his good fortune yet exhausted, for he was about to become the hero of a romance which is one of the strangest and most pathetic episodes in history.

In 1669 Mademoiselle de Montpensier, the niece of

Louis XIII and first cousin of Louis XIV, fell head over ears in love with the disagreeable little count, *le petit homme* as she used to call him. She was a large, masculine, good-hearted woman, with fair hair and bold features. In her youth she had been a heroine of the Fronde, had led armies and fired the cannon of the Bastille on the royal troops—a feat on which in later years the king used to rally her somewhat grimly. The richest heiress in Europe, she was ambitious to wear a crown; and if she had remained single it was not for lack of suitors. Charles II, in the days of his exile, had asked for her hand, and the King of Portugal had made similar proposals. But the Grande Mademoiselle, as she was called, had refused them both, as well as other less brilliant offers; in accepting a husband she was determined to please herself, and her independence had led to more than one quarrel with the king, who regarded her hand, and the fortune that went with it, as a valuable pawn in the game of politics. But all her ambitions and her masterful ways vanished before the mysterious attractions of *le petit homme*. The Grande Mademoiselle has told her love story in her Memoirs with a *naïveté* that disarms ridicule. Having once assured herself that she could not live without Lauzun, she determined to give free play to her affections. 'After carefully considering the "pros" and the "cons" in my head,' she wrote, 'my heart settled the matter, and it was at the Récollets that I formed my final resolution. . . . The next day, which was the second of March, I was very happy.' It does not seem to have occurred to the poor lady that a humble count could fail to return the love of a great princess; and, though she was forty-six and Lauzun ten years younger, the disparity in their ages did not alarm her. 'People of my rank,' she said afterwards, 'are always young.'

Lauzun, who was accustomed to conquer, soon observed that the '*vieille fille*' had fallen a victim to his charms, but, though he received her advances cordially, he regarded the friendship solely from a selfish point of view as a useful move in the game he was playing. Meanwhile Mademoiselle was thirsting for some tender word, or at least some meaning look, in answer to her dumb appeals. 'I don't know,' she wrote, 'whether he saw what was in my heart. I was dying to give him a chance of saying what his own felt for me, but I didn't know how to manage it.' At last she determined to have recourse to a stratagem which would pique his jealousy at the expense of his modesty. 'I led him to a window; his proud bearing made him for me the emperor of all the world. I began: "You have shown me such real friendship of late that I intend to do nothing without your advice. . . . People are saying that the king intends to marry me to the Prince of Lorraine. Have you heard anything about it?"' For a lover, Lauzun received the news with remarkable composure; but the Grande Mademoiselle was not to be daunted and she returned to the charge over and over again, hinting that she had made up her mind to marry, but refusing to give the name of the husband of her choice. Lauzun, who assumed an obtuseness which was very alien to his character, often gave the most disconcerting advice. He approved of her determination to marry. 'Nothing,' he said, 'is so ludicrous as an old maid of forty who dresses and enjoys herself like a thoughtless girl of fifteen. At that age a woman should enter a convent or turn *dévote*, or at least dress modestly and give up frivolities. Vespers, sermons, the poor, and the sick should be her distractions. Unless, of course, she marries . . . For then she will dress like the others to please her husband, and go to balls because he wishes her to do as everybody else does.'

The courtship was still at this stage when a bolt suddenly fell from the blue. In June 1670 Monsieur, the king's brother, lost his first wife and cast his eyes on the Grande Mademoiselle as a possible successor. The king was not unfavourable to the scheme, and Mademoiselle was in despair. She was determined to have Lauzun and nobody but Lauzun. But Lauzun was frightened. To be the indirect means of thwarting the royal plans was not the way to keep the royal favour, and he forbade Mademoiselle to see or speak to him. However, the danger passed away. The king sounded Mademoiselle on the proposed alliance but, finding that she was wholly averse from it, he refused to force her inclinations, and Monsieur found a second wife elsewhere. The field was once more clear, and Mademoiselle, despairing of drawing a declaration from the reluctant lover, determined to propose herself. Lauzun gave her little help, for he refused to be told the name of the man on whom her heart was fixed. However, at last it was agreed that she should write it on a bit of paper; she did so, and folding up the note carried it to the rendezvous in the queen's apartment. 'I produced the paper, on which there was a single word but one which meant so much, and showed it him; then I put it back, first into my pocket and afterwards into my muff. He urged me to give it to him and said that his heart was beating; before giving it to him I said, "You must answer on the same sheet."' Thus encouraged Lauzun at last decided to play for the big stakes and allowed Mademoiselle to write to the king. Louis, urged on by Madame de Montespan, gave his consent, and the engagement was made public.

It created something like consternation. Under the *ancien régime* rank was regarded as a sacred and divinely appointed institution, and a marriage between the heir to some modern European throne and a negress would create

almost less excitement nowadays than was caused by this *mésalliance* between a princess of the royal blood and a simple count. Louis was overwhelmed with reproaches; even the timid queen ventured to protest, and the Princes of the Blood were furious at what they regarded as an insult to their order. Nor were the *bourgeoisie* and artisans of Paris behindhand with their disapproval. The thing shocked their notions of what was fit and proper and upset all their preconceived ideas about the scheme of life. In a moment the Grande Mademoiselle fell from the rank of heroine to that of hysterical old maid, and never recovered her popularity.

Meanwhile, friends of this strange couple had been urging them to take advantage of the king's permission and to get married out of hand. But Lauzun was intoxicated with success: he wanted a great wedding, and a great wedding meant delay. At last, however, made uneasy by the growing resentment which was manifested on all sides, he consented to be married quietly at a friend's house at Charenton. But this prudent decision came too late. Madame de Montespan, alarmed at the unpopularity which her part in the affair was sure to bring upon her, spoke to the king, and Louis, who had had no idea what a nest of hornets he was stirring up by his good-nature, withdrew his consent. On the eve of the wedding, at 8 P.M., the Grande Mademoiselle received a summons to the Tuileries and was shown by a private door into the king's room, where the great Condé was concealed behind a curtain. 'I found the king alone, much moved, and sad. He said to me: "I am in despair about what I have to say to you. I have been told that I was sacrificing you to make the fortune of M. de Lauzun, that this would produce an unfavourable impression abroad, and that I ought not to allow the match to be concluded. You have good cause to complain of me.

Beat me if you like: there is no mark of indignation which I do not deserve from you and to which I will not submit." "Ah! Sire," I cried, "what are you saying! How cruel!" He threw himself on his knees; I did the same, and for three-quarters of an hour we remained clasped in one another's arms, his cheek resting against mine: he wept as freely as myself. "Ah, why did you give me time to think?" he cried, "why didn't you make haste?"'.

But, though the king had tears and sympathy in abundance, he was inexorable. On her way back to the Luxembourg, Mademoiselle had an attack of nerves and broke the glass of her carriage. After which she went to bed and stayed there for some days, receiving visits of condolence. Louis was amongst the visitors. The scene of tears was repeated, and cheek was pressed once more to cheek. One solid advantage Mademoiselle drew from the king's remorse, namely permission to see Lauzun whenever and wherever she pleased. It was almost tantamount to the royal sanction of a secret marriage, and perhaps it was so construed: but there is no certainty on the point. Anyhow, when Mademoiselle had recovered from the first shock of disappointment, she spent much of her time with *le petit homme*, who certainly treated her as her lord and master. She had already made over to him the Comté d'Eu and the principality of Dombes. But any hopes she may have formed of peace and happiness were shattered by the folly of *le petit homme*. Lauzun had discovered the double treachery of Madame de Montespan, and he was furious. Once more he repeated a former scene with her, and went about publicly denouncing her in the *salons* and the clubs. Madame de Montespan was frightened, for Lauzun was a dangerous and a reckless enemy. On November 25, 1671, he was arrested in his rooms at St. Germain and taken under close guard to the gloomy

Château of Pignerol, where Foucquet had already spent seventeen years in a kind of living death.

Saint-Mars, the governor of this prison, wrote to Louvois to apprise him of the preparations he had made for the expected guest.

'M. de Nallot . . . will tell you how I am preparing for M. de Lauzun. He will tell you, Monseigneur, that I shall lodge him in the two rooms below M. Foucquet; they are the same that you saw, with windows guarded on the inside by great bars of iron; my arrangements are such that I can answer for it, on my life, that M. de Lauzun will not be able to escape or receive any communication from outside. I pledge my word of honour, Monseigneur, that you will never hear speak of him, so long as he is in my keeping, any more than if he were dead . . . The place which I am preparing for him is so situated that I cannot make holes in the wall to watch him; but I intend to know what he does and says, down to the minutest detail, through the valet whom I shall give him. I have procured one with much difficulty, and it is this class of people who are my chief worry, because they don't like to spend all their lives in prison . . .'

Saint-Mars did his best to fulfil his promises; but the valet refused to play the spy. He was threatened with torture and the direst penalties, but, as it was found impossible to replace him, his defection had to be tolerated. In other respects the programme was rigidly carried out. For six years Lauzun never left his prison, was entirely cut off from communication with the outer world, and had no occupation. It was only after some years that he was allowed one or two pious books; so great was the fear that they might be used as a vehicle for correspondence; and his linen was carefully examined each time it came back from the wash lest it should contain some secret message. Saint-Mars visited his prisoner

twice daily, but he was forbidden to answer questions, and Lauzun was not even allowed to know whether his mother were alive or dead. At first it seemed likely that he would go mad. He neglected his person, allowed his beard to grow, and refused to speak to his gaoler; and his long fits of depression were only broken by outbursts of hysterical passion. But at last he found the necessary occupation which alone could save his brain from decay and give life a meaning. For three years he was busy planning an escape. With old nails and the blades of broken knives he tunnelled through the stone floor of his room till he had scraped out a passage large enough to admit his somewhat diminutive person. At the bottom he found himself in an empty chamber lighted by a barred window. By dint of patient industry he chipped off an angle of this window and removed one bar; then, letting himself down into the dry moat by a ladder made of towels, which he had carefully hidden, he burrowed under the wall and emerged one February morning in 1676 in a courtyard of the citadel. Unfortunately, instead of an open door he found an incorruptible sentry, and was marched ignominiously back to his cell.

However, he was no longer cut off entirely from human companionship; he had found a way to Foucquet's room through the broad chimney, and though Foucquet, when he heard tell of the projected marriage with the Grande Mademoiselle, felt sure that he was dealing with a madman, even mad visitors are welcome in a prison, and Lauzun frequently made the ascent of the chimney. In 1677, on the death of his elder brother, he was allowed to receive a business visit from his sister and younger brother. Lauzun played the part of the dazed and broken man so well that the sister fainted and the brother burst into tears. From this time onwards his lot became somewhat brighter. He was allowed to ride on the bastions

and even to entertain guests at dinner; and meanwhile events were happening which were soon to procure his liberty.

For the Grande Mademoiselle's affection had proved stronger than time or jealousy. When Lauzun was arrested his private papers had been seized, and the number of affectionate letters from Court beauties which were found amongst them proved a nine days' wonder. Mademoiselle was duly informed of the event, but with chivalrous self-command she refused to be influenced by it. She also had the courage not to show her resentment to the king or Madame de Montespan; and, though her piteous letters remained unanswered, she was assiduous in her attendance at Court, hoping that her red eyes and sad face would at least prevent the king from forgetting Lauzun's existence. At last, in the spring of 1680, her patience was rewarded. Madame de Montespan suddenly became friendly. 'Think,' she kept on saying, 'what you can do to please the king and so win him to grant what you so much desire.' It turned out that the thing which would best please the king would be for Mademoiselle to bestow on his favourite bastard the Comté d'Eu and the principality of Dombes, which she had already given to Lauzun. She was in fact to ransom the captive. She hesitated for a while but at last gave in, and it only remained to secure Lauzun's renunciation. With this object in view he was taken to Bourbon for his health, and Madame de Montespan journeyed thither to see him in person. But the captive thought the bargain too one-sided, and had to go back to prison again till he had learned sense. At last in 1681 he became a free man; but, instead of the expected permission to return to court, he received orders to go and live at Amboise.

Mademoiselle was indignant. She thought that she had purchased, not only complete freedom for her lover,

but the right to a public marriage, and she found that she had been duped. Madame de Montespan, reproached with her perfidy, replied cynically that a king doesn't bargain, and that, personally, she had pledged herself to nothing. So, with admirable good sense, Mademoiselle resolved once more to make the best of things. She induced the king to revoke his order of banishment; Lauzun was to be permitted to pay his respects to the monarch once: after which he might live where he pleased, provided that the place were nowhere near the Court. The ill-matched couple met once more at Versailles after a separation of ten years, during which neither of them had grown younger; and the meeting was a disappointment. Mademoiselle was waiting for her lover in Madame de Montespan's room. 'He came to me after seeing the king; he had on an old doublet, all torn, and a shocking wig. He threw himself at my feet and did it with a good grace. Then Madame de Montespan took us into her cabinet and said, "You will like to speak to one another alone." She went out, *and I followed her*.'

If they had not been married before, the pair were certainly married now; and, after a few preliminary skirmishes, the Grande Mademoiselle carried off her truant husband to the Château d'Eu. But, in spite of the cupids which adorned the ceilings, love or gratitude did not enter into the *petit homme's* feelings towards his wife. He courted the maids under the very eyes of the jealous lady, and there were scenes. Mademoiselle turned him out of doors, and to win back her favour he had to perform an act of humiliating penance. There was at the Château a long gallery lined with portraits: Mademoiselle stood at one end, Lauzun at the other; and he had to reach her on his knees! But the reconciliation was only temporary. The quarrels became

more bitter and violent and not infrequently ended in blows. The final rupture took place in the spring of 1684. Lauzun had asked for permission to accompany the king to the war in Spain, and his request had been refused. He thought, probably without any justification, that Mademoiselle was at the bottom of the refusal, and there was a scene at the Luxembourg. 'I met him with a smiling face and said, "You must go off to Lauzun or Saint-Fargeau; for, as you are not to accompany the king, it would be absurd for you to remain in Paris, and I should be sorry for people to think that I am the cause of your being left behind." He said, "I am off, and I bid you good-bye for the last time." I replied, "My life would have been happier if I had never seen you, but better late than never." "You have ruined me," he replied; "you have practically cut my throat; you are responsible for my not accompanying the King; you asked him to refuse me." "Oh, as for that," I said, "it's a lie; he will tell you so himself." He grew very angry, and I remained perfectly calm. "Good-bye, then," I said, and went into my private room. When I came back after a certain time he was still there. . . . I went up to him, saying, "This is too much! Keep to your resolution and begone." He withdrew.'

The Grande Mademoiselle kept to hers, refused all overtures of peace, and never again saw the man for whom she had made so many and such fruitless sacrifices. For a time she sought consolation in religion, but, failing to find it there, she returned feverishly to the pleasures of Court, and died in 1693.

After the final scene at the Luxembourg, Lauzun had discovered too late that he had killed the goose which laid the golden eggs. Despairing of retrieving his fortunes in France, he determined to try his luck in England

at the Court of James II. Once more his star was in the ascendant. He reached our shores in 1688, and the revolution which cost James II his crown restored Lauzun to the royal favour. Rising to the height of his opportunities, he planned and carried out the flight of the queen and her son, and appeared one morning at Calais with his precious charge, a hero of romance. The exiled king presented him with the Order of the Garter, and Louis XIV wrote him an autograph letter of thanks. The ban was removed, and, in spite of the Grande Mademoiselle's protests, he returned to the Court. As a reward for his services he was given the command of a French army sent to Ireland to support the cause of the Stuart dynasty. But he showed no capacity and was soon back in France. Louis made him a duke, but he received no further employment.

On the death of the Grande Mademoiselle he went into deep mourning, and two years afterwards, in 1695, he married the youngest daughter of the Maréchal de Lorges and thus became Saint-Simon's brother-in-law. His second wife was fourteen years of age at the time of her marriage, and her husband sixty-two. She expected soon to become a widow and thought that a few years of daily companionship with the most disagreeable man in France was not too big a price to pay for wealth and the title of duchess. But Lauzun upset her calculations by living for another twenty-eight years—jealous, malicious, witty; an amusing man to meet and an impossible one to live with. As such he had a host of acquaintances and no friends. At ninety he was still breaking in horses, and he retained his love of practical joking to the last. 'In his extreme age he had an illness which nearly proved fatal. One day, when he was very ill, he saw in a mirror that two of his heirs had entered the room on tiptoe and were hiding behind the curtains

to see if they could discover how soon they were likely to come into their inheritance. Lauzun pretended not to see them and began to pray aloud, like a man who believes himself to be alone. He asked God to pardon his past life and regretted that he had no time left for penance. There was but one way left to him, he said, of winning salvation, and that was to employ all the wealth that God had given him in atoning for his sins; and he took a solemn vow that he would leave all that he possessed, without a single exception, to the hospitals. He made this declaration with such fervour that his heirs fled in dismay to relate the disaster to Madame de Lauzun.'[1]

He was carried off at last by a cancer in the mouth. As soon as he realised the incurable nature of his malady he retired to a small suite of rooms which he had hired previously, in the convent of the Petits-Augustins, as a kind of lair to which he might retreat and die. There he remained inaccessible to all except his wife and nearest relations, intent on making his peace with Heaven, and bearing his cruel sufferings with stoical courage. He died on November 19, 1723, aged ninety years and six months, and left no children.

Another romance, of a somewhat similar kind, ended more happily. 'There are,' says Saint-Simon, 'at all Courts, some remarkable people who, without great ability, distinguished birth, or influence, manage to work their way into the intimacy of the *élite*, and finally, no one exactly knows how, become a power to be reckoned with. Such a one was Cavoye.' His mother, a member of the *petite noblesse* and a clever woman, had had the good fortune to please the dowager queen, Anne of Austria, and had taken advantage of the circumstances to launch her son at Court. Cavoye was one of the best made men in France, and one of the best dressed, and this fact, coupled

[1] Saint-Simon.

with a reputation as a duellist which had earned him the title of *le brave Cavoye*, made him a favourite with the ladies. The king also took a fancy to him, and when, piqued at being omitted from the list of promotions to the order of the Saint-Esprit, Cavoye threatened to retire from Court, Louis personally entreated him to stay and promised to provide for his future. Among the maids of honour of Queen Marie-Thérèse was a certain Mlle. de Coëtlogon, plain, sensible, naïve, kind-hearted, and generally popular. She fell violently in love with the handsome Cavoye and made no attempt to conceal her feelings. But Cavoye had no sympathy with the victim of his charms: he was cold, sometimes almost brutal to her, and extremely annoyed at the ridiculous position in which she placed him. For, though there were people who were sorry for the lady, her behaviour gave much cause for mirth to the wags of the Court. When Cavoye was sent on active service, Mlle. de Coëtlogon was continually in tears and went into half-mourning while the campaign lasted; and when, one winter, the gallant was sent to the Bastille for acting as second in a duel, the scenes were even more heart-rending. Mlle. de Coëtlogon implored the king to show mercy, and on his refusal threatened the royal visage with her nails. At dinner, which the king took daily in public with the queen, it was the duty of the maids of honour to wait at table; but so long as Cavoye remained in the Bastille Mlle. de Coëtlogon refused to serve the king, either evading the duty or saying point blank that he was not worthy of such service; till at last Louis took pity on her and told the Duchesse de Richelieu to take her occasionally to visit Cavoye in his captivity.

When finally the prisoner was released, Louis sent for him and offered him the post of *Grand Maréchal des Logis*, on condition that he consented to marry the love-

sick maid. At first Cavoye sniffed at the proposal, but, finding that a refusal would mean the end of his career, he gave a grudging assent. Contrary to what might have been expected, the marriage turned out happily. Mlle. de Coëtlogon never lost her admiration for Cavoye, and he, though he was sometimes embarrassed by her public caresses, was a good husband. Their home was the *rendezvous* of the flower of society, and constituted a tribunal of taste whose censure no one cared to incur.

Another person of somewhat the same type was Langlée. 'He was,' says Saint-Simon, 'originally a nobody, but his mother, a clever and intriguing *femme de chambre* of Anne d'Autriche, had made for herself influential friends, and planted her son at Court in the best society. Langlée made his *début* at the card table. He was doubly fortunate, for he not only gained enormous wealth, but was never once suspected of tampering with the cards. With very moderate abilities but a profound knowledge of the world, he knew how to lend gracefully and to wait still more gracefully for repayment; and, in this way, he earned the reputation of being a generous and obliging friend. A friend of Monsieur and Monseigneur, both of whom loved high play, he never lost sight of the king, and gradually made himself indispensable at all shows and spectacles. He was invited to the Court *fêtes* and all the Court journeys, including *the Marlis*; he was intimate with all the king's mistresses and afterwards with the king's daughters, and was on such familiar terms with the latter that he often ventured to tell them unpleasant truths. He established himself as an authority on entertainments and fashions to such an extent that, from the Princes of the Blood downwards, no one gave a *fête* without asking his advice, and no one built or bought a house without consulting him on its arrangement, its decoration, and its furniture. If a marriage was to be

celebrated, it was Langlée who designed the dresses and selected the presents; if a love affair was developing, it was Langlée who was called in as confidant; for he was discreet, secret as the grave, and ready to help a friend with his purse or his counsel. The king tolerated him, but everybody else bowed down before him, and at his house in Paris he entertained the pick of the Court, including the Princes of the Blood, with almost royal magnificence; and there was nobody, however exalted, who was not pleased to attract his friendship.'

A wholly different type of man, but a type that was beginning to come into prominence, was the great financier. The prejudice of the landed aristocracy against trade had, it is true, not yet been broken down; but long and costly wars had rendered borrowing on a large scale inevitable and enhanced the importance of the money-lender, and even the proudest of monarchs had to humble himself when his exchequer was empty.

The wealthiest and most adventurous financier of the day was Samuel Bernard, a name which sent a cold shiver through the blue blood of the de la Rochefoucaulds and the Montmorencys. He had purchased the *seigneurie* of Rieux, and with it a doubtful claim to the title of Baron; but his descendants were compelled to resell the property to the son of the former owner at the original price. He had business dealings in most of the countries of Europe, but the bulk of his fortune was made in France. In 1708 the king had need of further advances, but Samuel Bernard, the only man who was capable of negotiating the loan, proved obdurate, and Desmarets, the *directeur des finances*, was in despair. As a last resource Bernard was requested to come to Marly on business. There the king met him as if by accident, and after remarking that he was pleased to find him with Desmarets, said suddenly: 'I shouldn't wonder

if you had never seen the gardens! Come and join me in my walk and I will return you to Desmarets afterwards.' Bernard followed. The king talked much to him and pointed out the objects of interest with the grace and charm of manner which he knew well how to employ. No doubt this condescension cost the royal pride more than one pang: but the humiliation had its compensations. Bernard was vain, and the purse-strings were untied. The great financier could refuse nothing to so affable a king. But he had to pay for his weakness. In 1709 he became bankrupt at Lyons; Desmarets, however, came to his assistance and tided him over the crisis. There were unkind tongues which insisted that Bernard had made of his bankruptcy a profitable speculation; certainly, when he died thirty-five years later, he left behind him an enormous fortune.

If Samuel Bernard represented the coming race, de la Rochefoucauld, whose permanent favour earned him the title of 'the king's friend,' was a typical specimen of the old nobility who went under at the Revolution. His career, like that of many notable figures of the day, was full of the unexpected. The son of a father whose services to the Fronde had earned him the king's undying enmity, and himself destitute of talents, he seemed to have but little chance of rising to favour in a hostile Court. But Louis took a fancy to him; his very lack of intellectual gifts made his company agreeable to a young and proud monarch who felt his own ignorance acutely. De la Rochefoucauld became indispensable and was made *grand maître de la garde-robe* and subsequently *grand veneur*. 'He was,' says Saint-Simon, 'a man of courage and of honour, but entirely moulded at Court, magnificent in everything, superior to display, a good and serviceable friend, and not afraid of braving the royal prejudices on behalf of those whom he desired to serve.' On the other

hand, 'he was extraordinarily ignorant, vain, hard, jealous of all rival influences, and, though he had spent his life at Court, ill at ease with all but his inferiors.' His favour with the king was so firmly established that it was regarded as unshakeable and survived the personal dislike of Madame de Maintenon. But he had to pay dearly for it. On the one hand there was dirty work to be done as messenger between the king and his many mistresses, and on the other there was the daily attendance on a monarch who was never prepared to waive his personal claims on his friends. The daily *lever* and *coucher* and the two other changes of the royal garments, the walk in the gardens, the hunt in the forest—these were functions which de la Rochefoucauld was never allowed to miss, year in year out. Three or four times in the year he dined in Paris, and rather oftener in a small house he owned near Versailles; and four or five times in his life he obtained permission to go to the country for a few weeks. For the rest of a long life he was attached like a body-slave to his royal friend, without holidays and even without permission to be ill.

His rooms at Versailles were always open from morning to night; but, owing to the insolence of his servants, whom he spoiled, they were little frequented by the *élite*. They were, however, crowded by the idlers and bores of the Court, who made them their asylum, took their meals in them, and endured patiently the ill-humour of the master. For his wife and children he had no affection, and he was the slave of his own servants. The evening of his life was clouded by disappointment; he had the misfortune to grow old and blind and to outstay his welcome. 'In his latter days his valets abused his good-nature and made him ask such ridiculous favours from the king, on behalf of themselves and their friends, that Louis grew accustomed to refuse, and the favourite to

complain. Moreover his sight was failing rapidly and he could with difficulty perform his duties as *grand veneur*. Unable any longer to mount a horse, he followed the chase in a carriage. When the stag was killed, he got out of his carriage and was led towards the king to present him with the foot, and not infrequently, through defective sight, he would thrust the gory trophy into the royal eyes or ears. Louis sometimes ventured to urge him gently to take his well-earned rest ; but the thought of abdication was painful to the aging favourite, and he clung desperately to the duties which he was no longer able to perform.'[1] At length, in 1709, pride came to his rescue ; and, with bitterness and despair in his heart, he withdrew from the Court. Even then his servants were determined to keep him within striking distance of the monarch, in order that they might enjoy such benefits as he could wring from the wreck of his credit or the king's pity. They took him to Le Chenil, at Versailles, where solitary, blind, unoccupied, and a prey to his servants, he tasted the bitterness of fallen greatness. He died in the January of 1714, a year and a half before his royal master.

A more attractive and, perhaps, a more typical character, was the Maréchale de Villeroy, mother of the general whose incapacity lost France the battle of Ramillies. 'She was extremely short, with scarcely any neck, and so stout that she could hardly move : her arms were as big as an ordinary leg, but she had a delicate wrist and beautiful small hands. Her face was exactly like a parrot's, with large, prominent, and short-sighted eyes. She walked, too, like a parrot. In spite of this unpromising exterior nobody was ever more imposing. With a distinguished bearing she combined a noble and discriminating courtesy. Nobody, too, had more wit or

[1] Saint-Simon.

a more plentiful stock of common-sense, with a way of saying things which was peculiar to herself. Humorous and amusing when she chose to be so, she never forgot her dignity. Her advice was always excellent, she was the surest of friends, and, in spite of her pride, a delightful companion. The king and Madame de Maintenon were afraid of her, and, though she lived at Versailles, she never attempted to win their favour.'[1] *Née* Cossé, with the bluest of blood, she despised the humble origin of the Villeroys. Nevertheless she had the good sense to live amicably with her husband, though she could never accustom herself to his *bourgeois* habit of removing his wig in private. Like so many of her contemporaries, as soon as she felt the hand of death closing upon her, she withdrew from the Court and the society of her friends to spend the remaining months of her life in retirement, praying in her armchair or listening to pious books which were read to her by her servants. She died in 1708 at the age of sixty.

If the Court of Versailles was too often the home of frivolity and worthlessness, it offered some examples of rare and striking goodness. Such pre-eminently were the lives of the Ducs de Beauvillier and Chevreuse. They had both married daughters of Colbert and lived in such intimate relations that the two households formed one family. In many respects the two men were very dissimilar. Beauvillier was the practical man, Chevreuse the dreamer; Beauvillier was precise, methodical, and punctual, apologising to his coachman if he kept him waiting a minute beyond the appointed time; Chevreuse, the more talented of the two, was unbusiness-like in his habits, sanguine, and careless. But they were alike in the simplicity of their characters and in a charity which was a mute reproach to the scandal-loving gossiping tongues of

[1] Saint-Simon.

Versailles. Intrigue and jealousy surged round them unheeded and often unobserved; and they were, perhaps, the only men of their position who not only would not repeat, but would not even believe, evil of their neighbours.

Beauvillier had the more distinguished career. His solid worth attracted the king's admiration at a time when Louis honoured virtue more in the abstract than by example. One day, during the royal walk, Beauvillier was slightly ahead of the others, alone and deep in thought. One of the courtiers called attention to the fact, remarking sarcastically that the duke was probably at his prayers again. The king overheard the taunt and, turning round, said quietly, 'Yes, that is M. de Beauvillier, one of the wisest men at my Court or in my kingdom.' This unexpected eulogy marked Beauvillier out as a likely subject for preferment, and in due course of time he became President of the Council of Finance and a member of the Council of State, being the only duke who attained to the position of minister throughout the long reign. When the time came to appoint a *gouverneur* for the Duc de Bourgogne, Louis selected Beauvillier, and the choice was universally approved. His friendship with Fénelon was within an ace of costing him his place. Fénelon had been the spiritual adviser and trusted ally of the two dukes and of a select group of the more serious spirits at Court, which for a time had included Madame de Maintenon in its ranks. When the taint of Quietism banished Fénelon to Cambrai and his book was condemned by the Pope, it was generally supposed that the two friends would share his disgrace. Heterodoxy was with Louis the one unpardonable sin, and he hesitated for some time between what he believed to be his duty and what he felt instinctively would be a mistake. In the end instinct proved stronger than

principle: Beauvillier retained his post and, though attempts were sometimes made subsequently to shake his credit, they always failed in their object.

Perhaps compassion helped to fortify Louis' regard for his minister; for, in 1705, Beauvillier suffered a cruel domestic bereavement. He had two sons, aged respectively seventeen and sixteen, and small-pox carried them both off within a week of one another. 'I know no sermon,' says Saint-Simon, 'so touching as the grief and profound resignation of the bereaved father and mother, their bitter sense of loss which never mastered their entire submission to the will of God, the gentle calm exterior, and the hopeful words which sanctified their tears. After the first weeks I tried gently to change the conversation when M. de Beauvillier spoke to me of his dead children. He noticed it, said that he knew I meant to be kind, and thanked me for my good intentions; but he added that there were so few people to whom he could speak about his loss that he begged me to continue the subject when he began it, as he only did so when he felt a pressing need, and to talk relieved him. I obeyed him, and often afterwards, when we were alone, he talked to me about his boys; and I saw that to do so was, in fact, a comfort to him.'

The lives of both of these men were so much of a piece that there is little of a sensational character to relate about them. They proved that it was possible to be respected and influential at Court without employing the arts of a courtier. Chevreuse died first, in 1712, Beauvillier two years later. Thus they both escaped witnessing the moral degradation of French society during the Regency.

Though Vatteville was not a leading figure in court life at Versailles, his career was so extraordinary that it deserves a brief mention, if only to show what

possibilities there were at this time for unscrupulous daring when it had the sanction of good birth.

The Abbé de Vatteville belonged to a noble family of Franche-Comté, and his elder brother had been Spanish ambassador in London in 1661, at a time when Franche-Comté still formed part of the Spanish Netherlands. The abbé had early in life entered a Carthusian monastery and had been ordained priest. But the restrictions of monastic life were little suited to his roving and arbitrary disposition. A secular disguise, money, a brace of pistols, and a horse which he kept at a short distance from the convent, enabled him for a time to vary the monotony of prayers and fasts. But the Prior got wind of his irregular proceedings and, entering his cell one night with a pass-key, found the enterprising monk booted and spurred and on the point of descending a rope ladder which he had fastened to the window. The predicament was an awkward one, but Vatteville rose to the occasion and, drawing his pistol, shot the intruder dead. After which he fled across country by solitary paths. On the third day he came to a lonely inn, with an appetite whetted by exercise and fasting, and asked the landlord what there was in the larder. The landlord replied that there was a leg of mutton and a fowl, and Vatteville ordered them both to be prepared without delay. When the meal was on the point of being served, another traveller appeared on the scene, likewise bent upon dining, and, hearing from the landlord that the victuals were all bespoken, he went up to Vatteville's room and proposed politely that, on due payment, he should be allowed a share in the entertainment which was enough for more than two hungry men. Vatteville refused point blank ; the stranger expostulated, and expostulations degenerated into a quarrel, to which Vatteville put an end by shooting the unfortunate guest. He then ate his dinner undisturbed and rode off.

Convinced that Christian Europe was no longer a safe place for him, he made his way to Constantinople, abjured his faith, and took service in the army. Fortune smiled upon him; he was made Pasha and given a command in the Morea, where the Sultan was engaged in warfare with the Venetian Republic. But Vatteville was now pining for home, and entered into negotiations with the Italian generals. He offered to betray several strong positions and bargained that, in return, the Venetians should obtain from the Pope complete absolution for his crimes and apostasy, protection against the Carthusians, and full restitution of his rights as priest. In the interests of Christendom the Pope consented to the bargain; the contract was drawn up in due form, and Vatteville handed over the fortresses to the enemy. After serving for a short time with the Venetian army, he took ship to Europe and reappeared in his native Franche-Comté. When Louis conquered and annexed the province, Vatteville rendered important services to the French cause, and, as modesty was not amongst his failings, he demanded as a recompense the Archbishopric of Besançon. But the Pope was reluctant to grant the bull, and the ex-monk had to be content with the abbey of Beaume, an estate in Picardy, and several other privileges. The rest of his life he spent, partly in his abbey, partly on his estates, occasionally visiting the Court, where he was always well received. He kept a fine pack of hounds, and an open table which was honoured by the best of company; tyrannised over his dependents and defied the tax collectors, who had orders from the Court to wink at his proceedings. When other amusements failed, he would ride over to the Carthusian monastery to gibe at the monks and enjoy their discomfiture. He died at length in 1702 at the age of ninety, full of years and of honours.

CHAPTER V

LOUIS XIV

Character—Education—Death of Mazarin—The new régime—His ideas of kingship—His marriage—Mistresses—Saved by Madame de Maintenon—Secret marriage.

THE central figure of the daily pageant of Versailles, the sun round which the lesser lights revolved and from which they took a reflected glory, was Louis XIV. His contemporaries, dazzled by the splendour of his early achievements and the proud position amongst the nations to which he had raised France, bestowed on him the title of 'the Great.' We, who look back across the centuries, can see that the ruinous wars in which he involved his country, and the cast-iron system under which he fettered her liberties, paved the way for the Revolution and the downfall of the monarchy. He created nothing permanent. His conception of sovereignty, which was the guiding principle of his life, has been discredited; and the social system which was the foundation of his fabric has been swept away. Only his lust for an unreal glory and his craving for an impossible uniformity remain—the eternal stumbling-block alike of ambitious monarchs and rich democracies.

But, if his contemporaries overrated him as a king, we are perhaps in danger of underrating him as a man. It is unfortunate that Saint-Simon, whose graphic pen has done much to fix our ideas of Louis, only knew him

in the later years of a long life and was influenced by a political bias which may have been justified but was certainly strong; unfortunate, too, that the painter Rigaud has given us so striking and dramatic a conception of the monarch in his old age that we are apt to forget the earlier busts by Bernini and Coysevox.

In such a complex character as that which Louis XIV presents to the biographer, so full of contradictions, so beset with unexpected shallows and equally unexpected depths, it is well to fix at the outset a few of the permanent qualities which, through stress and strain, were always operative and helped to shape the actions and the habits of the man. Like most of the Bourbons, Louis was endowed with a strong physique, a prodigious appetite, and an unusually large element of the animal in his composition. His constitution was not naturally robust, and the excessive amount of food which he consumed daily was the cause of frequent attacks of dyspepsia in youth and of gout in old age. On the other hand, he possessed great recuperative powers, a marked capacity for continuous work, and a useful faculty of doing with little sleep. With the Bourbon physique he inherited the Bourbon brain, slow, tenacious, and unimaginative, but capable of forming sound judgments.

Nearly all his contemporaries, even those who had most cause to judge him harshly, were agreed that the king was naturally 'kind and just.' Saint-Simon, the Grande Mademoiselle, and Madame the Princess Palatine never doubted that, if the king could only be made to see on which side justice lay, he would do the right thing. Unfortunately the aloofness in which he lived made him difficult to approach, while his slow intelligence and deep-rooted prejudices made him equally difficult to convince; and a capacity for believing that things were what he wished them to be—dangerous in a private individual and

fatal in a ruler—prevented him from correcting a false impression or reversing a mistaken policy.

Though not gifted with a quick intelligence, Louis possessed great powers of will. Nobody was better able to conceal the thoughts and emotions that surged within him under a calm and impassive exterior. This gift of dignified self-control, which was never more noticeable than in the misfortunes which clouded the closing years of his reign, impressed his contemporaries with a feeling that almost amounted to awe; and though it sometimes laid him open to a charge of duplicity, it won him the respect of a quick-tempered and emotional race, who were accustomed to feel strongly and to speak as they felt. A modern parallel might perhaps be found in the influence which the same quality gave to Charles Stewart Parnell over his Irish colleagues.

What Louis seems wholly to have lacked was imagination, that quality which is at the root of most virtues and all successful statesmanship—the power of putting himself in the place of others and realising how they would think and feel. Without it no autocrat, however excellent his intentions, can fail to do harm. No sense of duty, however high, no principles, however tenacious, can take its place. Indeed it is the unimaginative, high-principled men who are responsible for the worst cruelties in history. With such there is no room for the fits of good-natured pity which temper the indifference of a Charles II or a Regent of Orleans; the consciousness of a high purpose and the conviction that they are in the right blind them to realities and keep them steadily in the wrong; and Louis was never so dangerous to his country as when his political desire for uniformity was fortified by a new-found zeal for the true faith and a burning desire to atone for the follies of his youth by some signal service to religion.

And yet, although with his natural limitations Louis could probably never have been a great king, he might have been a good one. All depended on his early education. Out of his strong animal passions, which after all are at the root of character, his vigorous will and his instinctive love of justice, a Fénelon might have moulded a ruler whose memory would have been more dear to France even than that of Henri IV. Unfortunately there was no Fénelon to guide, to encourage, and to control, the child who was destined to hold the sceptre of France for more than fifty years. His education was *nil*, and the crime was Mazarin's.

At the death of his father in 1643, when Louis was five years old, his mother, Anne of Austria, became regent, but the real power passed into the hands of Cardinal Mazarin, who was determined to keep it there. 'Is it surprising,' wrote Madame in 1716, 'that the King and Monsieur his brother were so badly educated? Cardinal Mazarin was determined to govern; if he had educated the two princes, they would have had no need of him and he would have ceased to dominate. That was what he wished to prevent, expecting to live longer than he actually did. The queen-mother approved of all the cardinal did, and wished him always to remain at the head of everything. It is a marvel that the king was no worse than he was.'

Mazarin had given orders that the young king was not to be '*trop instruit*,' and as he had appointed himself *surintendant de l'éducation*, a new post with a handsome salary attached to it, he was able to make sure that his wishes were carried out. Louis was taught a modicum of French history and a smattering of geography, mathematics, and Latin, the last-named subject being an indispensable part of a statesman's education, as the Emperor of Austria and the Pope of Rome still wrote all their despatches in

that tongue. But he learned nothing thoroughly, and the boy's natural disposition seconded the cardinal's views. For Louis was not a rapid learner, had a marked aversion from study, and would frequently escape from the tedium of the school-room to the private apartments of his mother; and Anne of Austria, though devoted to her son, was too ignorant herself to realise the value of knowledge, and made no attempt to send back the truant to the uncongenial task or to punish his idleness.

From very early times Louis suffered from the preoccupations of his mother and the remissness of his governess, Mme. de Séneçay, who doubled the post of *gouvernante* with that of *dame d'honneur* to the regent. Madame de Maintenon, who was an authority on education, used often to talk to the king about these early years. 'The King always surprises me,' she told her ladies at Saint-Cyr, 'when he talks of his education. His governesses, he says, played all day long and left him in the hands of their waiting-women. . . . He ate anything he could lay his hands on. If an omelette were being fried, he would clutch some pieces of it, and he and Monsieur his brother would devour their plunder in a corner. He was often tended by a peasant woman, and his ordinary companion was a little girl, the daughter of one of the waiting-women of the Queen's waiting-women. He used to call her '*la reine Marie*' in their games, and always made her take the part of queen, while he acted as her page or footman, pushed her about in a chair, carried her train, or held a torch in front of her'—a strange beginning for a monarch who was afterwards to be known as the proudest and most dignified in Europe.

Nor did the thrifty Mazarin allow him to be spoiled by luxury, if the testimony of La Porte, his *valet de chambre*, is to be believed. 'It is customary,' he says, 'for the king to have twelve pairs of sheets a year, and

two dressing-gowns, one for summer and one for winter; nevertheless I have seen him obliged to do with six pairs of sheets for three whole years, and one dressing-gown of green velvet lined with miniver for the same time, so that at last it only reached half way down his legs. As for the sheets, they were so worn that several times I have found his legs thrust through them and resting on the bare mattress.'

But, if the boy was kept short of sheets and not encouraged to pursue useful studies, there was no lack of appeals to his vanity. One of the first copies that he was set to write consisted of the phrase, 'Homage is due to kings: they do what they like.' But perhaps the most pernicious influence of all was the 'Royal Catechism,' a book composed by Godeau, Bishop of Vence, for the use of Louis. It took the form of an imaginary dialogue between Villeroy, the *gouverneur* of the young king, and his royal pupil. Such sentiments as 'You are the handsomest child in the world. . . . You are the visible and authentic image of God. Your Majesty should always remember that you are a Vice-God,' were not calculated to teach modesty. But the work contained still more dangerous ideas. Speaking of Protestantism the bishop dwells on the political consequences of schism.

'How fatal has been the so-called Reformation!' he says. 'Whoever introduces schism into Faith introduces it also into the loyalty which is due to the king. . . . Since there is a connection between the laws of the State and Divine law, whoever disturbs the one disturbs the other, and is equally guilty of *lèse-majesté*; consequently he deserves to be punished. Religion teaches subjects to reverence the king without having seen him, just as they worship God without seeing Him. Therefore, royalty has an interest in supporting the Papal See, the

cardinals, and ecclesiastics, who are the depositories and ministers of this doctrine.'

And here are some of the earliest lessons he received on war from the same source :—

'The great and shining qualities which we see in all conquerors give them a claim on our esteem, although they make the world a desert. Wars are storms which serve to purge the earth, as tempests purge the air. Conquerors who depopulate the world are ministers of God. Widespread desolations, being periodic and fatal, have their reason and necessity; and, if they meet us on their path, let us bow gratefully to the immutable decrees that order the world. Resistance and affliction of spirit are a secret murmur against Providence.' [1]

Mazarin after a while suppressed the book, but the seed had fallen on congenial soil and at the most impressionable age, between ten and eleven ; and, when we think of the Revocation of the Edict of Nantes and the many wars that marked the reign, we can hardly doubt that it bore fruit.

The boy's religious education was carefully superintended by his mother and was of the orthodox Spanish type. Anne d'Autriche was a great frequenter of churches, but of the spirit of the Gospels she knew but little. Not that she was a bad woman. Her affection for her son was sincere and, in spite of misunderstandings, was returned till death removed her from the scene. But she was stupid, and her righteousness was little in advance of that of the Scribes and Pharisees.

Every morning when he rose from bed Louis repeated the 'Office of the Holy Spirit' and told his beads. Then

[1] Godeau, in spite of his sanguinary theories, seems to have been a man of gentle character and habits. The contrast need not surprise us, for in all ages the most humane of men have at times been carried away by a sudden enthusiasm for war.

Péréfixe, his tutor, entered, and the day's work began with the reading of some passage from Scripture. He learned to submit patiently to all the forms and ceremonies of religion which the Church enjoined, and these early habits never deserted him. 'Even in his wildest days,' as he naïvely confided to the Grande Mademoiselle, 'he always found religion a great help to him.' Unfortunately, his spiritual growth was arrested in its most primitive stage, and to the end of his days faith meant to him chiefly a punctilious observance of forms, a hatred of the Huguenots, and an almost greater horror of Jansenism. By the splendid effort of will, by which he freed himself from the sins of the flesh, he saved his own soul alive; but France had to pay a heavy price for the unenlightened piety of Anne of Austria.

At eight he was a remarkably handsome child, as he was afterwards a remarkably handsome man, well formed, 'with regular features, eyes gentle and at the same time serious, a clear, fair complexion, and fair hair.'[1] His favourite game was that of war, his favourite toy a box of soldiers. In the grounds of the Palais-Royal they had built for him a small model of a fort, which he alternately attacked and defended, and that with such energy that he often came into the palace drenched with perspiration.

He already held decided views on some of the attributes of royalty. During a journey to Amiens, taken when he was nine years old, he was distributing as *largesse* some money that he had won at cards the night before. Villeroy, his *gouverneur*, tried to moderate his generosity, and told him to give a certain soldier only half a pistole. 'For the soldier or for you that would be enough,' said the boy, 'but not for me. He must have the whole pistole.' The child was in this respect father of the man, and the lavish gifts of his later years were the

[1] Mme. de Motteville; in later years he became very dark.

natural sequel of ideas that were allowed to grow unchecked. If someone had impressed upon him, while he was still capable of learning, that a generosity which was paid for ultimately by the peasant was not a very noble quality, he might at least have avoided the worst extravagances of his reign. But such unpalatable truths were seldom spoken to princes, and never to Louis XIV. The marvel is, as Madame justly wrote, that he was not wholly spoiled, for his upbringing was of the kind that might well have produced another Nero; and Louis XIV must have been exceptionally endowed by nature to have saved from this enervating childhood so many of the qualities that command respect. He had a tutor who never contradicted and often flattered; a mother who seldom allowed him to be punished and always took his side, right or wrong, in any disputes he had with his brother; no young companions of his own age (thanks to the parsimony of Mazarin) to chaff or criticise or give him a standard of comparison, and instead the frequent society of women who petted and flattered. On one subject only his mother was inflexible, and that was religion. Louis was locked up in solitary confinement for two whole days for swearing. He took the lesson to heart, and though in after years his Court was not always conspicuous for its morality, bad language was tabooed.

This desultory education was still further hampered, as Louis neared manhood, by the wars of the Fronde, which left the young king bitter memories and imbued him with the idea that all resistance to royal authority savoured of rebellion. The result of it all was that, at twenty-two, Louis was perhaps more fundamentally ignorant than any of his contemporaries at Court. Accomplishments indeed he had. He could speak Italian—the only language. other than his own, which he ever knew at all accurately; he could ride, fence, dance, and play

tennis or *mail*, better than anyone else in his kingdom. He was fond, too, of music, and, though he never knew a note, he had an accurate ear and could hum correctly an air that he had heard only once. Saint-Simon records, as an instance of his excessive vanity, that he would often in the days of his glory sing aloud, and in public, passages from opera which were full of extravagant praise of himself. Madame de Maintenon, no doubt more truly, states that he was so taken with tunes that he paid little attention to the words and would sing his favourite airs in blissful forgetfulness of their context. In his youth he performed on the guitar, and music was one of the few solaces of his sad old age.

If the frequent society of women tended to foster his vanity, it also helped to form the polished manners which distinguished him through life. 'Nobody,' says Saint-Simon, 'was ever more naturally and charmingly polite. He never passed a petticoat without lifting his hat, even though the wearer was a *femme de chambre* and he knew her for such; as often happened at Marly.' It was in the company, too, of Mazarin's nieces that he acquired the turn of speech which lends a dignity and weight to trifles. 'The King,' to quote Saint-Simon again, 'talked well, in appropriate terms, and with discrimination. Nobody could tell a story better than he, and his most commonplace remarks were never devoid of a certain natural dignity.' But he was not a great talker, and his silence, especially in his youth, was wrongly ascribed to shyness.

But though he could ride, play the guitar, and direct a ballet, of solid knowledge Louis possessed little or nothing. 'He had scarcely learned,' says Saint-Simon, not without exaggeration, 'to read and to write, and he remained so ignorant that the commonplaces of history, genealogies, law, &c., remained a sealed letter to him,

and his ignorance sometimes led him, even in public, into making the most absurd mistakes.' As, with the advent of manhood, he was thrown more into the society of young men of his own age, he became conscious of his ignorance and ashamed of it.

In his Memoirs, addressed to his son, he says:—

'When one is a child, one considers learning a pure vexation; when one begins to transact state-business, one regards it as a worthless trifle; but when the reason begins to ripen, one recognises its importance, and one feels a keen regret at not knowing the things which everybody else knows. One learns, too late, how important it was to apply oneself while one had full leisure.'

To Paris, and to most of the Court who knew of his idle habits but had not gauged the character that lay beneath them, he was a gay and gallant prince, whose interests did not rise above the chase and the ballet, and who would always leave the business of government in the hands of his ministers—the very type of the pleasure-loving, do-nothing king. A few people indeed had seen with clearer eyes. Mme. de Motteville had early noted that 'he was wise enough to speak little for fear of speaking foolishly,' and Mazarin had said, 'You will see, he has the stuff of four kings in him.'

Nevertheless, when, on the death of the cardinal in March 1661, Louis XIV announced his intention of being his own prime minister, scarcely anybody took him seriously. But this was not the only occasion in his life on which the king's habitual reserve misled his contemporaries. If he had said little he had thought much, and his determination to rule as well as to reign was no sudden whim, but the result of long and deliberate purpose. On the day of Mazarin's death he shut himself up alone for two hours and drew up the routine which was to serve him for the rest of his life. Six to eight hours

of solid work a day, exclusive of court ceremonies which were often more fatiguing than actual brain-work, was the task which he set himself, and which he performed daily and without a holiday for more than fifty years.

In times of difficulty and crisis these six or eight hours often became ten or twelve. If Louis XIV was bent on dazzling the world, he was prepared to pay for glory with his own person. It needed a dauntless resolution and an iron will, suddenly to convert an existence which had been one long holiday into a life of laborious activity; but, though absolute monarchy meant drudgery for the monarch, Louis was content to pay the price. He did, no doubt, regard it as a sacred duty.

For his conception of monarchy was in a much truer sense his religion than the creeds which he repeated without understanding them. He had frankly accepted the theory that he was the 'visible image of God on earth.' However fatuous such an idea may appear to us now, it had at least its ennobling side. 'How angry I should be with you,' he replied one day to the impertinences of Lauzun, 'if I were not king': for the vicar of God must be superior to the petty weaknesses which are pardonable in a private individual. Accordingly Louis did exercise a wonderful control over his feelings, his passions, and his griefs. Even when most angry, he spoke with dignity and moderation, and seldom said the things that wound. Unfortunately, he did not weave into this conception of monarchy any idea of responsibility to his subjects. 'He who has given men kings,' he says in his Memoirs, 'has willed that they should be respected as His lieutenants, and reserves for Himself alone the right of judging their conduct. His will is that whoever is born a subject should obey blindly.' In fact, Louis regarded his kingdom very much as a man with a passion for horticulture regards his garden. Such a man

feels it incumbent on him to make the most of the ground. Unsightly weeds or barren places are a reproach to him; but he does not feel responsible to the flowers, and has no compunction in rooting up a specimen that is growing in a faulty way or in a place other than the one intended for it.

Add to this that Louis believed himself to be inspired. 'Listen to advice, consult your Ministers, but decide for yourself': he wrote to his grandson Philippe V of Spain. 'God who has made you king, will give you the necessary wisdom, provided your intentions are good.' This was the faith which inspired Louis XIV and gave him strength to change the currents of his life. God had made him king, and, so long as he earned it by good intentions and continual application, divine inspiration would not fail him. It was a simple faith; and, in a way, one cannot but respect it. If it was the secret of his failure as a king, it was also the key to his best endeavours as a man.

Not content with the Herculean task of governing his kingdom himself, Louis attempted another and almost equally difficult feat. He decided to begin his education afresh.

'I determined,' he writes in his Memoirs, 'to take out of my leisure time the hours necessary for this study. . . . I saw that it was important for my reputation, considering the place I occupied in the world, that I should not be ignorant of the things with which a decent man ought to be familiar; that it was almost a disgrace to have to resume this study so late, but that it was better to learn late than to be ignorant for ever of what one ought to know. I determined to assign certain fixed hours to this new pursuit, as I might have done to some important business of state.'

It required some moral courage to go to school again

at the age of twenty-three, especially as learning, at that epoch, was so intimately connected with the rod that it had in most minds humiliating associations. Louis was conscious of the ridicule which his action was sure to provoke.

'The one scruple which embarrassed me was that, seeing the consideration I enjoyed in the world, I should feel some shame in returning to an occupation which I ought to have completed long before.'

But it is difficult to master the rudiments of any branch of knowledge when the habit of learning has not been acquired in childhood, and Louis' efforts were not crowned with success. After a time his slow progress and the pressure of public affairs compelled him to give up the task as hopeless, and, to the end of his days, he would sometimes remark sadly, '*Je suis ignorant.*'

The advent of autocracy was destined to have far-reaching and, in the end, ruinous consequences for France; but in his determination to be his own master the young king had the great body of public opinion behind him. There was, it is true, a party among the *bourgeoisie* that still regretted the ancient liberty of its parliaments, but the mass of the nation was weary of the struggles of the Fronde and desired nothing better than a strong central government, that would keep the Condés and the other great families under control and save the country from the scourge of roving armies. The French too, till the days of the Revolution, always had a touching belief in their kings; and it took a Louis XV to destroy their faith in the innate virtue and capacities of their rulers.

The new *régime* had, moreover, at the outset, all the prestige of success. Colbert reformed the finances, the armies were paid and justice simplified; and with that marvellous recuperative power which has more than once

astonished the world, France responded to the change. Industry and commerce advanced by leaps and bounds, and, in 1668, orders were flowing into Paris from all parts of the world. The nation, conscious of its recovered health and growing strength, was loud in its expressions of gratitude and praise to the young monarch. The very unexpectedness of his achievements added to their value, and the sudden metamorphosis of the timid pleasure-loving youth into the hard-working confident ruler seemed little short of a miracle. An attractive exterior helped to enhance his popularity. 'He had,' says Saint-Simon, 'the figure of a hero, and his whole person was naturally endowed with the most imposing majesty. He was admirably proportioned, a very model for painters and sculptors, with a perfect face and the most dignified expression and bearing that a man has ever had.' To this we must add a charm of manner, which, when he chose to exert it, he could exercise with irresistible effect. 'It is true,' wrote Madame in 1709, 'that when our king wishes to be affable nobody in the world can be so attractive. There is a complete absence of constraint in his behaviour, and he has so much natural courtesy and such a charm in his voice and manner of speaking that one falls in love with him at once.'

The whole nation felt the charm, and praise of the young king became the favourite topic of orators and poets. Sincere at first, it soon degenerated into senseless flattery; his most trivial actions became worth recording, and his pleasures a merit. 'This week,' says the Official Gazette of April 7, 1663, 'the king enjoyed a walk at Saint-Germain-en-Laye and at Versailles, as some relaxation from his continuous efforts for the establishment of the happiness of his subjects.'[1] Classical mythology was ransacked by ingenious organisers of public

[1] Arvède Barine. *Louis XIV et la Grande Mademois lle.*

shows in order to give point to their extravagances. When, in 1662, the king went to take possession of Dunkerque, which he had purchased from Charles II of England, 'Neptune lowered his trident, and the genii of land and water prostrated themselves before the mighty prince.' At court *fêtes* he was Apollo, the presiding deity of the new Olympus, '*le roi soleil*,' who figures so often in the frescoes and fountains of Versailles. In Molière's '*Les Amants magnifiques*,' when Apollo enters, the chorus sings:

Quelle grâce extrême!
Quel port glorieux!
Où voit-on des dieux
Qui soient faits de même?

And the apotheosis did not stop at Olympus. A thesis in which the king had been boldly compared with the Almighty was, through Bossuet's influence, suppressed by the Sorbonne in 1685; but Bossuet himself did not scruple to cry from the royal pulpit, 'Oh gods of dust and clay, you will die like men. Nevertheless, you are gods, even though you die!'[1]

It is the fate of all monarchs to be flattered, but nobody ever swallowed flattery more greedily than Louis; and the taste grew upon him with years. 'Look you,' said the Duc de Gesvres to Saint-Simon: 'in dealing with the king I have to make myself small, small, small; like that,' he added, pointing to the ground with his hand, 'in order that I may become bigger afterwards.' 'The king liked to be feared,' says Saint-Simon. 'When timid people who had to speak to him became confused and lost the thread of what they were saying, nothing pleased him better or so effectually served their cause.' He accepted the most extravagant acts of homage with a

[1] Arvède Barine. *Louis XIV et la Grande Mademoiselle.*

satisfaction that was more than mere complaisance. In 1707, on his way to Fontainebleau, he slept the night at Petit-Bourg, the seat of the Duc d'Antin. D'Antin showed him over the estate and 'everything was admired except an avenue of chestnuts, which was the glory of the gardens but shut out the view from the king's windows. D'Antin said never a word, but, the next morning, when the king looked out of window, he saw the finest view in the world, and not a single trace of the former avenue. There had been no noise and no excitement. The trees had simply disappeared as if by magic, and the ground had been levelled. The king was highly pleased.'[1]

At a much earlier period of his life he had enjoyed an equally gross piece of flattery. 'He had had occasion to write to the Duc de Montbazon, governor of Paris, and had sent the letter by a footman. M. de Montbazon was on the point of sitting down to table when the messenger arrived. He read the letter and wrote a reply, which he handed to the footman. The servant bowed and was about to withdraw. "No," said the duke, "you have come from the king and you must do me the honour of dining with me." There was a large company present, and the servant was not a little confused; but the duke would take no refusal, made him sit down and helped him first. Dinner ended, he escorted his guest to the steps and did not leave him till he had seen him mount his horse. The king used often to relate this story, and seldom failed to add, "That is what I call *savoir vivre*." '

One thing only could have saved Louis from this childish vanity, a sense of humour; and humour was a quality which he conspicuously lacked. It is true that in his early manhood he protected Molière, but it may be doubted whether in his heart of hearts he did not admire Molière the flatterer more than Molière the satirist.

[1] Saint-Simon.

Moreover, it is possible for a man to enjoy satire without having a very profound sense of the ridiculous. Louis could laugh at a practical joke, but he had no real appreciation of fun or chaff, no power of being amused at *himself*; and he was never comfortable in the presence of Madame de Caylus, Madame de Maintenon's witty cousin, simply because he suspected her of laughing at *him*. On the rare occasions on which he attempted to be facetious, he only succeeded in being *gauche* or boorish, as when he put hairs in the butter of Madame de Montespan and her sister Madame de Thianges, both of whom were rather dainty and squeamish about their food.

But, though he liked his flattery 'laid on with a trowel,' there were a few people from whom he would take the plain unvarnished truth, and whom he respected for their frankness; and there were times when a blunt answer was more effective than the subtlest adulation. To the numerous applicants who waylaid him with petitions he was in the habit of replying, '*Je verrai*' (I will see about it). A Gascon officer who had lost an arm in the king's service, but who, being a Protestant, had found insuperable difficulties in the way of a pension, as a last resource approached the king in person. '*Je verrai*,' replied the king, and was about to pass on. 'But, sire,' said the officer, 'if I had said "*Je verrai*" to my general when he sent me to the battery where I lost my arm, I should still possess it and should not be asking you for anything.' The king, struck by the justice of the answer, granted the pension on the spot. As Madame said, the king was naturally *bon et juste*—if only you could get at him.

In 1660, the year before Mazarin's death, Louis had married. On bended knees he had implored his mother and the cardinal that Marie Mancini might become his wife. But, fortunately for France, Mazarin feared the

influence of his clever and impetuous niece. Strong in the support of the queen-mother, he offered an uncompromising resistance to the infatuation of the young king. Marie was exiled to Brouage, and Louis was reminded that a monarch's affections must wait on policy. The bride selected for him was Marie-Thérèse, daughter of Philip IV, king of Spain. The wedding was a long and difficult business, as it was impossible for a king of Spain to give away his daughter on French soil, and equally impossible for a king of France to fetch his bride from Spanish territory. Fortunately the Ile des Faisans lay exactly on the border-line between the two countries; half of it was in France and half in Spain. A pavilion was erected in the centre, and the two kings entered it from opposite doors. Louis advanced on a red carpet of French manufacture; Philip walked, step for step, on a Spanish carpet of silver and gold: and the two monarchs embraced each other over the frontier.

On June 3 Louis was married by proxy in the church of Fontarabia; on the 6th the official ceremony took place on the Ile des Faisans; on the 7th Anne of Austria conducted her daughter-in-law on to French soil; and on the 9th the happy pair were married for the third and last time at St.-Jean de Luz, and were at length allowed to speak to each other; for up to this point they had never exchanged a single word.

Marie-Thérèse had grown up in the belief that she would one day be queen of France, and Louis had been the 'Prince Charming' of her girlish dreams. The 9th of June saw the realisation of her hopes; the rest of her life was a long disillusionment. It is impossible not to sympathise with the tragedy of this unhappy queen, the most harmless and the most insignificant of all the characters who have played a part on the royal stage. And yet, if any excuse is to be made for the infidelity of Louis, it is

to be found in the person and character of his wife. Short, undistinguished, with fair hair, round eyes, the Austrian lip, a heavy chin, and fat hanging cheeks, she looks what she really was—inoffensive and stupid. Not even the court painters could invest her with any halo of dignity or make her appear more distinguished than a kitchenmaid dressed up as a queen. And her mind matched her face. She never even mastered French. 'Our dear queen,' wrote Madame in 1709, 'used to speak a strange kind of French. To begin with, her "u's" were all "ou's." Besides, she used to say "servillietta" for "serviette," "Sancta Biergen" for "Sainte Vierge," "des eschevois" for "des chevaux," and so on.' She possessed no conversation, nor any of the arts that might have fixed the affections of a husband accustomed to the sprightly and clever society of Mazarin's nieces; and she was too nervous even to perform her official duties as queen with credit. Louis, after the death of his mother, had tried to accustom her to hold a *cercle*, a solemn gathering of great ladies over which the queen presided; but after a few dismal failures the attempt was abandoned.

Her temper, too, was that of a fretful child. If the king took her with him on his journeys, she was discontented and grumbled; if he left her behind she wept floods of tears; if he were dissatisfied with his dinner, she was unhappy; if he liked it, she was miserable for fear it should all be eaten up and nothing left for her. She was gentle, chaste, and religious; but Madame de Maintenon, who was a martinet on the subject of religion, admitted that her piety was more suited to a Carmelite nun than to a queen. The tragedy of the situation was that, to the end of her days, poor Marie-Thérèse was in love with her truant husband and suffered cruelly from his many and open infidelities. To the end of her days, too, she was afraid of him, and a summons to appear before him

reduced her to such a pitiable state of nervousness that she found herself tongue-tied in his presence; sometimes she had to be literally pushed into the room, trembling like a jelly.

On November 1, 1661, the Dauphin was born, the only one of Marie-Thérèse's six children who lived beyond infancy. His birth, which was hailed throughout France with transports of joy, nearly cost the mother's life. Louis, who had confessed and communicated, was present during the prolonged and trying ordeal. He was easily moved to tears, and exhibited on this occasion a becoming anxiety and sympathy. But the people who weep most easily are not always those who feel most deeply.

Within a year of his marriage Louis had begun that series of adulteries which shocked the better minds of France and dealt a blow at morality which the repentance of his later years was powerless to heal. It was almost inevitable that a man whose daily life was so public and so trammelled by court etiquette should sometimes have a craving for private companionship and feel the need of a confidant. Louis, together with his taste for public representation and display, had a domestic side to his character, which unfortunately could not find its satisfaction in the company of Marie-Thérèse. He was not drawn to the society of men, and, except for de la Rochefoucauld, he never had a real male friend in his life. By nature and upbringing he was one of those to whom life is incomplete without the society of the other sex.

Had Louis been faithful to his first love, it would have been possible, if not to pardon, at least to understand. But, when once he had broken through the bounds of modesty, he threw away all restraint, and his relations with his mistresses and his lawful wife came as near to the Oriental conception of polygamy as anything that has been seen in a Western Court, a fact which is certainly

startling in a king who regarded himself as a defender of the Christian faith and who only once in his life missed hearing daily Mass.

Mlle. de la Vallière, the first and most charming of his illicit wives, was as disinterested as she was beautiful; and it may at least be said of her that love and not ambition wrought her undoing. Though her affection proved stronger than her scruples, she was never really happy in her false position; nor did she use her influence either to aggrandise herself or to humiliate her enemies.

The king for a time loved her passionately. But he was not allowed to enter on the primrose path without a struggle. The *Cabale des Dévots*, a secret society of which mention has already been made, fought for his soul with more zeal than discretion. But to a final appeal made to him by his mother Louis replied, with tears, that he knew he was doing wrong; that he sometimes felt grieved and ashamed; that he had done all he could not to offend God, and not to abandon himself to his passions; but that they had become stronger than his reason; that he could no longer resist them, and did not even feel a desire to do so. To the jealous and tearful reproaches of his wife he replied cynically that he hoped at thirty to be a better husband.

The *fêtes* of the '*Ile Enchantée*' at Versailles, in the May of 1664, were the official consecration of these illegal bonds. They lasted for six days. The queen and the queen-mother were present, and the king entertained six hundred guests. If there had been any doubt as to the significance of the celebrations, the '*Princesse d'Elide*,' composed by Molière for the occasion, would have resolved them.

Dans l'âge où l'on est aimable
Rien n'est si beau que d'aimer.
Soupirez librement pour un amant fidèle
Et bravez ceux qui voudraient vous blâmer.

The lover was *not* faithful, but neither Molière nor Mlle. de la Vallière could foresee that at the time.

The one counter-attraction which could at times draw the young king away from the pleasures of love was the pursuit of glory. Louis was no coward, but he earned the laurels of a hero rather cheaply. He never took part in a decisive battle, nor can he be credited with planning any successful campaign. He had a head for detail but not for large designs, and, though he would have been a good regimental officer, he would have failed as a general As it was, his military achievements consisted mostly in finishing sieges that were on the verge of completion. He was usually accompanied into the field by his wife and mistresses, and these royal progresses were the despair of the generals in command; but, as the king never guessed their secret thoughts and they for their part were careful not to betray them, he used to return well satisfied from his royal campaigns. Perhaps he was almost fonder of the great reviews, which he occasionally held in time of peace, than of the pageant of actual war. At a time when transport was difficult and troops were expected to live on the inhabitants, a great army would be concentrated somewhere in the neighbourhood of Paris; and, as there was no enemy to interfere with gala arrangements, the king was able to display unhindered his graceful horsemanship and military skill before the eyes of admiring ladies. It was in vain that Colbert remonstrated, pointing out that this mimic warfare was almost as costly as a hard-fought campaign, and even hinting that there was something ridiculous in war before women. The king read his remonstrances but ignored them. It was the minister's *métier* to grumble.

At the beginning of 1666 Anne of Austria died of cancer, after seven months of cruel suffering aggravated by the incompetence of her doctors. Louis, in spite of

occasional quarrels, had been really fond of his mother and was at first overwhelmed by his loss; but he had a great gift for forgetting, and the shock, which nearly reduced him to unconsciousness for a moment, did not alter the course of his life. The death of the queen-mother removed one of the few restraining influences at Court and let loose the ambitions that aimed at the young king's heart. In the face of this keen competition Mlle. de la Vallière's ascendency did not last long. She had nothing but her beauty and her gentleness to recommend her, and Louis liked the society of clever ladies. In 1667 she was definitely supplanted by Madame de Montespan. Though cruelly wounded in her affections, she hardly struggled against her successful rival. For a brief space she endured at Court the humiliating position of an abandoned sultana, and the armies of France saw the strange spectacle of the queen, de la Vallière, and the Montespan, driving in the same carriage; while the soldiers asked each other jestingly whether they had seen 'the three queens.' Eventually she retired to a convent and expiated her faults by a life of austere penance.

Madame de Montespan, wife of the marquis of that name, was a woman of a very different stamp. She was one of three sisters, *nées* Mortemart, who all possessed in a high degree the wit that was characteristic of their family, 'a wit,' says Saint-Simon, 'of so subtle, original, and agreeable a turn, that it was *sui generis*.' Madame de Montespan was the most beautiful of the three. She had a perfect complexion, but owed her powers of fascination, not so much to the regularity of her features, as to an indefinable charm in which wit, liveliness, and physical attraction were inseparably blended. Unfortunately her character did not correspond with her pleasing exterior. 'She was,' says Saint-Simon, 'spiteful, capricious, ill-tempered, and proud.' The queen suffered from her

arrogant behaviour, very different from the attentions and respect she had always received from Mlle. de la Vallière, and she was sometimes goaded into exclaiming, 'This wench will be the death of me!' The king, too, had to endure her haughty and domineering temper, and she often made him scenes 'of which,' in Madame de Maintenon's words, 'he was not proud.' But for eight years her ascendency was complete and cost the unhappy taxpayer millions. The first rupture took place in 1675. Shortly before Easter, when all good Catholics (and Madame de Montespan counted herself as one) confessed and communicated, a simple priest, with a courage that was often lacking in his superiors, refused absolution to the favourite on the ground that she was leading an openly immoral life; and he was backed in his refusal by the curé of the parish. Madame de Montespan complained to the king, and priest and curé were dismissed. But Bossuet, bishop of Meaux, who had been appointed tutor to the Dauphin, took up their cause, and appealed to the king's conscience with such effect that, although there was no open breach, Louis and his mistress separated. For a few months the religious party at Court believed that the king was about to enter on the path of reform: but the separation did not last for long, and by the end of the year Madame de Montespan was reinstalled in the royal favour and to all appearance more powerful than ever; for the following year Madame de Sévigné saw her at the royal card-tables at Versailles, 'with her head resting familiarly on her lover's shoulder, as if to say, "*Je suis mieux que jamais.*"'

In reality the succeeding years were embittered by a continuous struggle. Louis' affection was growing cold, and he was weary of endless scenes and the violent and domineering temper of his mistress. Madame de Montespan was intellectually his superior, and she was too

little careful to conceal her knowledge of the fact; moreover, she made the fatal mistake of trying to bully him into fidelity. Perhaps, although she did not know it, her strongest hold on him lay in his affection for their children. In 1675, by a formal Act, he had recognised his illegitimate offspring, including a daughter he had had by Mlle. de la Vallière.

Few of Louis' actions were more blamed by his contemporaries than the favour he showed to his bastards. No doubt his behaviour was impolitic: and the recognition of this second family, side by side with his legitimate heirs, gave rise to jealousies, dissension, and intrigues, which could not fail to weaken the royal authority. No doubt, too, vanity entered into the motives which prompted him to exalt whatever was intimately connected with the royal person. But it would be unfair to deny that the action did him credit as a man. Polygamy always brings with it a curse; but Louis XIV's ambition for his natural children was more human and more respectable than the cynical indifference of Louis XV to his illegitimate offspring. Anyhow, the affection he felt for the children of Madame de Montespan may well have made him shrink from an open breach with the mother. Perhaps the *Chambre ardente* in 1680, and the connection then revealed between his mistress and La Voisin and her criminal world, removed his last scruples. It was probably not without intention that, in the May of the same year, as he stepped into his carriage at St. Germain, he complained to the queen, in the presence of Madame de Montespan, of the scents which the latter affected and which made him feel ill; for it must be remembered that many of the deaths by poisoning were supposed to have been caused by scents. Still there was no open and irreparable quarrel: only when, in the previous year, Madame de Montespan had been made *surintendante de la maison de la reine*, the

appointment was regarded both as the sign of her dismissal and as the reward of past services. She took her defeat ill. From the Court she finally passed to Clagny, the villa which Louis had built for her at Versailles at enormous cost, and from Clagny to a convent, where, haunted always by the fear of death, she endeavoured, like her predecessor, to make her peace with heaven.

Before he was entirely off with the old love Louis XIV was on with the new. In 1679 he fell in love with Mlle. de Fontanges, and her favour was made public. But the infatuation did not last long, and the sudden and peculiar death of the lady, in 1681, made any renewal of the intimacy impossible. Madame roundly accuses Madame de Montespan of poisoning a successful rival, and the circumstances were certainly suspicious; but there were others besides the Montespan who were interested in the removal of a dangerous competitor. For the king's affections were known to be free, and there were many who were eager to fix them. Mme. de Soubise, Mme. du Lude, and others, enjoyed a passing favour; and everything pointed to a succession of scandals, similar to those which have made the latter years of Louis XV's life a byword, when the influence of Madame de Maintenon won its first conspicuous triumph and saved the king from a shameful old age.

Louis XIV first made the acquaintance of this remarkable woman when, as Mme. Scarron, she was governess to Madame de Montespan's children. Saint-Simon's story, that he took so strong a dislike to her as to press for her dismissal, is more piquant than probable; but it is certain that some years elapsed before the acquaintance ripened into friendship. Mme. Scarron had belonged to the intellectual *coterie* satirised by Molière in *Les Femmes savantes*, and Louis had expected to find in her a formidable blue-stocking. He was surprised and

pleased to discover, instead, a clever but thoroughly sensible and practical woman, who was witty enough to hold her own with Madame de Montespan, but not too intellectually proud to stoop to the royal level. Their intercourse at first turned solely on the children who were in her charge. Then, in the quarrels between the king and his mistress, which yearly became more frequent and more acute, Mme. Scarron, as the mutual friend, became the confidante who was called in to listen to grievances and make the peace. The secret of her final ascendency is to be found in the fact that, in her company, Louis for the first time tasted the delights of real friendship. He had reached an age when, as a relaxation from his labours, he needed something more restful than the capricious moods of Madame de Montespan, or the tedious bustle of pageant and Court *fêtes*. He had exhausted the violent emotions of youth and was ripe for a tranquil and reasoned friendship. But experience had given him a somewhat cynical idea of the other sex. He warns the Dauphin in his Memoirs to love wisely and not too well, and above all, not to allow the influence of women to extend beyond the hours of pleasure. 'They are eloquent in their expressions, urgent in their entreaties, obstinate in their ideas, and incapable of keeping a secret'—in a word, agreeable playthings but dangerous comrades.

In Mme. Scarron he learned to value a type of woman with which he was unfamiliar. Intelligent, sympathetic, and absolutely discreet, she opened to him the gates of a new and unsuspected world. Above all, she was disinterested. He was accustomed to have his favour exploited; if ever he felt personally drawn towards an individual, he expected to be made to pay for the indulgence of his feelings by pensions, donations, sinecures; but, except for the modest estate of Maintenon, which cost 200,000 francs (a trifle for a king who was

accustomed to give in millions) and which enabled Mme. Scarron to assume a less plebeian name, his new friendship cost him nothing. Probably love, in the ordinary meaning of the word, did not enter into his feelings for this woman. Indeed, it was unlikely that it should do so; for, at the time when they first became really intimate, Madame de Maintenon was already forty years old. In 1679, when her influence was beginning to be decisive, she was still the confidential friend who could be trusted to hold her tongue, and who was called in to put unpleasant matters straight. 'I remember,' she says, 'that one day the king sent me to talk to Madame de Fontanges; she was furious about some slight she had received; the king was afraid of a scandal and had sent me to calm her. I was two hours with her, and spent the time in trying to persuade her to leave the king, and to convince her that this would be a noble and praiseworthy course of action. I remember that she replied impetuously, "Why, Madame, you talk of putting off an attachment as if it were the same thing as taking off a garment."'

In the early years of her acquaintance with the king, Madame de Maintenon's ambition did not soar beyond a modest competence and a quiet retreat in the country. The Court had no attractions for her, and its intrigues and follies disgusted. But, gradually, as she found her influence growing and her presence becoming indispensable, she conceived the idea that it might not be beyond her powers to convert the king and wean him from the life of scandalous pleasure which was doing such grievous harm to morality and religion. Her talents were those of an ideal governess, patient, observant, tactful, determined to win by persuasion and not by force, and gifted with the instinct which tells its possessor when a reproof will be effective and when it will only irritate. Louis, spoiled

from his cradle and cut off from the realities of life, still had much of the child in his nature, and Madame de Maintenon read him as a child. She had the perspicacity to see that, at the bottom of his character, and stronger and more permanent than his passions, was a feeling which, if it was sometimes little better than superstition, was nearly allied to religion. For many years, with a patience and perseverance that were undismayed by repeated checks, she set herself to cultivate the better side of the royal nature. Nor, when the occasion seemed propitious, did she shun plain speaking. 'Sire,' she said to him one day, when they were together at a review, 'what would you do, if you were told that one of these young officers was living publicly with the wife of another man, as if she were his own?' The king laughed and did not reply; but no doubt the shaft went home.

The increasing prestige of the governess was not likely to be pleasing to Madame de Montespan, who was too shrewd not to see in what direction this new influence was tending. The two women grew estranged, and Madame de Maintenon's position, owing to the violent temper of her former friend, became a painful one. But, in 1680, the marriage of the Dauphin enabled the king to put an end to this distressing situation and at the same time to give a public mark of his favour. Madame de Maintenon was made *dame d'atour* of the new Dauphine, one of the proudest positions at Court that a lady could hope to occupy. In September of the same year Madame de Sévigné recorded that the courtiers had christened her 'Madame de Maintenant,' and that every evening from eight to ten she was closeted with the king. It is not surprising to find that, in the following year, Madame de Montespan, who hoped against hope to recover her hold over Louis, had *les vapeurs*.

In the July of 1683 the queen died, after a few days' illness, at Versailles. In the spring of the same year she

had followed the king in a triumphal progress through the new provinces of Franche-Comté and Alsace, and at her special request, Madame de Maintenon had been allowed to accompany her. Her affection for the new favourite is not difficult to explain. Madame de Maintenon had used her influence with the king to recall him to a sense of his duties towards the neglected wife. 'The queen died,' says Mme. de Caylus, 'at a time when the age and piety of the king were making her happy. He paid her attentions to which she was not accustomed; he saw her more often and tried to amuse her; and, as she attributed this happy change to Madame de Maintenon, she liked her and showed her all possible marks of esteem. I remember that she used even to do me the honour of petting me whenever I appeared before her.' Four days before her fatal illness, Marie-Thérèse had confided to Mme. de Vizé that never in her life had she been so happy, 'for now she was perfectly satisfied and wanted nothing more in the world.'

The king displayed a becoming sorrow: it is permissible to hope that remorse entered partly into his grief; but the Court was little affected by the queen's death. Worse people have left a greater gap behind them than poor harmless Marie-Thérèse.

From the death-bed of his wife Louis withdrew to Fontainebleau. Madame de Maintenon was lodged in the queen's apartments, and the ministers worked with the king in her presence. An accident to Louis, who fell from his horse while hunting and broke an arm, threw the two friends together more than ever. A crisis had come in both their lives, and Madame de Maintenon's letters betray her agitation. Early in the following year, at midnight, they were married secretly at Versailles. Père La Chaise officiated; Harlay, Archbishop of Paris, the Marquis de Montchevreuil, and Louvois, were witnesses;

and Bontemps, *premier valet* of the king, served as acolyte. Louis was forty-five years old and Madame de Maintenon forty-eight.

By his marriage Louis broke definitely with the past and performed the most creditable action of his life. In no other way could he have secured the permanent companionship of the woman who had become necessary to him; for Madame de Maintenon was too high-principled, or, as her contemporaries would have said, too narrowly *dévote*, to accept an ambiguous position or assume a *rôle* which lacked the sanction of religion.

The marriage, universally suspected though never publicly announced, shocked the prejudices of the time, and perhaps of all times; for monarchs too often regard it as their duty to sacrifice their truest interests as men to a mistaken conception of reasons of state. Nobody ever held more extravagant views on the dignity of kingship than Louis XIV, and nobody had a greater horror of *mésalliances*. It is impossible to doubt that, in marrying the widow of the dramatist Scarron, the *Grand Monarque* consciously and deliberately sacrificed some of his dearest and most cherished principles. But the sacrifice was not made in vain. If Madame de Maintenon's influence was sometimes prejudicial to the best interests of her country, if her religious views were narrow and her political outlook limited, she gave her husband the moral support which his scrupulous but sensual nature required; and the remaining years of his reign were unstained by any of those sins which had marred his youth and nearly ruined his life.

CHAPTER VI

LOUIS XIV—(*continued*)

The family circle—Revocation of the Edict of Nantes—His horror of Jansenism—Port-Royal des Champs—Jealous of his rights—Louvois and the sack of the Palatinate—His ministers—His selfishness—A stickler for etiquette—Loses his temper at Marly—Sufferings of the poor—A sad old age—His death.

In the May of 1682 the Court had been transferred definitely to Versailles. Henceforth the Ministers and all the departments of State were quartered in the palace, and Louis had his nobility lodged, as it were, in his own house and permanently under his observation. One is tempted at first to feel surprise at the change which had come over the once independent spirit of the great families, and to wonder how they came to submit so tamely to the king's conception of their position. But it must be remembered that the wars of the Fronde had crushed their opposition, while the splendour of the new *régime* had dazzled them. Moreover (and most important of all) the lucrative charges and fat pensions were, under a highly centralised system of government, all in the royal gift. If the Condés and the Rohans and the Guises wanted their bread and butter, they had, whether they liked doing so or not, to earn it in the way that the king approved.

Though he was continually in the public eye, Louis was less accessible than he imagined to any but those who had the private *entrées* or who were brought into personal contact with him by their official position. It is

true that anybody who had a favour to ask might approach the king as he returned from Mass through the *Galerie des Glaces* to the private apartments; but the publicity of the place, the dread of an open rebuff, and the impossibility of speaking at any length (for the king did not stop, but merely motioned to his immediate followers to fall back for a few paces), rendered this privilege of little value. Private audiences were rarely granted, even to those who were employed on State business. The few who secured them generally came away content, 'for there,' as Saint-Simon says from personal experience, 'the king, however prejudiced he might be at the outset, listened patiently, kindly, and with an obvious desire to understand. One found in him a spirit of justice and a desire to know the truth, even though he was angry. There everything could be told, provided always that it was told with that air of respectful submission without which one only made matters worse; but with it, provided one spoke the truth, one could interrupt the king, deny his assertions point blank, and raise one's voice above his in speaking. And not only was he not offended, but he would congratulate himself afterwards on having given the audience.'

In the gardens the courtiers might follow the king without permission; and for many years the gardens were his great delight and a walk in them his favourite recreation. Saint-Simon, who was nothing if not critical, considered them to be in 'bad taste.' 'One can only reach the freshness of the shade by crossing a vast and torrid zone, at the end of which one is obliged either to mount or to descend; and, with the hill, which is very short, the gardens end. The shale burns your feet, but without it you would sink, here into sand, there into the blackest mud. The water for the fountains, collected in huge reservoirs from all the neighbourhood, is green, thick, and

muddy; and gives off a vapour which is unhealthy and perceptible, and a smell which is still more so. The effect of the fountains, which have, however, to be used sparingly, is incomparable; but the result of it all is that one admires and runs away.' Saint-Simon, however, did not express the general opinion of his time, which considered the gardens to be the masterpiece of Le Nôtre; and Louis, with pardonable pride, himself drew up an itinerary for the use of visitors, of which a copy, written in his own hand, exists in the National Library at Paris.

'On leaving the palace by the vestibule of the Cour de Marbre you will step on to the terrace; you must pause at the top of the steps to get a general idea of the situation of the *parterres*, the fountains, and the *cabinets d'eau*.'

And so through the Allée d'Eau, where fountains, placed on either side, shot up their water in such a way as to form a liquid vault overhead, the visitor is conducted to all the wonders of the place—the Latona, the Orangerie, the Girandole, the Mountain of water, the Ile royale, the Colonnade, and the Baths of Apollo; he is invited to embark in a gondola and visit Trianon, or the Menagerie which faces it on the corresponding arm of the Canal; till finally, 'after turning at the top of the terrace steps to view the Parterre du Nord, the statues, vases, the Pyramid, and all that can be seen of the Neptune, he will leave the garden by the gate through which he entered.'

Madame de Maintenon, after her marriage, seldom appeared in public, and, when she did so, modestly assumed no higher place than that to which she was entitled as '*dame d'atour* of the Dauphine.' But in the private apartments she presided as queen over the family circle, where Louis, cured of his excesses, now spent such leisure time as the cares of State allowed him. The task she had set herself was not an easy one; the royal family,

though outwardly united by a common fear of the king, was composed of imperious and discordant elements, and it needed all her tact to prevent dissensions from becoming acute, and to secure at least the semblance of harmony which was necessary for the king's peace. The daughters of Madame de Montespan inherited something of their mother's reckless and mordant tongue, and could only be kept in order by a firm hand. Fortunately Madame de Maintenon, though indulgent to the faults of youth, could speak sternly when occasion demanded, and a scolding from her was an ordeal which the young princesses dreaded almost more than a rebuke from the king. The elder of the two, Mlle. de Nantes, afterwards Mme. la Duchesse, was pretty, clever, intriguing, and spiteful; the younger, Mlle. de Blois, who married the future Regent, grew to be a handsome but rather idle woman. For the Princesse de Conti, his daughter by Mlle. de la Vallière, Louis had less affection. She was radiantly beautiful till small-pox destroyed the freshness of her charm, without however disfiguring her; and, in a Court that was critical of beauty, she still passed for one of the prettiest women of her day. She attached herself to her half-brother, the Grand Dauphin, and was more influential at Meudon than at Versailles.

The Grand Dauphin himself did not add much to the gaiety of the family gatherings. Handsome, but 'splendidly null,' he was never at his ease in the presence of his father and almost more afraid of Madame de Maintenon. The king, too, had little real affection for his son and heir, and Monseigneur was happier in his own château at Meudon, where he imitated on a smaller scale the parental vices, than in the royal cabinets of Versailles or Marly. The Dauphine, while she lived, was generally ill, and bad health had soured her temper. Monsieur, the king's only brother, was much at St. Cloud; but, when he joined the

family party, his gossip, though wearisome in large doses, was amusing for a while and helped to keep the ball rolling. Madame, his wife, who loathed Madame de Maintenon, '*la pantocrate*' as she styled her, and who was incapable of concealing her dislikes, was tolerated at meals, but was no longer admitted to the privacy of the king's *cabinet*.

The favourite, both of the king and of Madame de Maintenon, till the Duchesse de Bourgogne came to win their hearts, was the Duc du Maine, the eldest surviving child of Louis and Madame de Montespan, who inherited his mother's cleverness without his mother's temper. Constitutionally feeble, he would probably have died in childhood had it not been for the devoted care of his governess, to whom he always remained deeply attached. Saint-Simon and most of his contemporaries thought him sly, unscrupulous, and a hypocrite. Mme. de Staal, however, who had exceptional opportunities for judging, formed a different opinion. 'He was,' she says, 'enlightened, clever, and well-read. Religion rather than Nature had endowed him with all the virtues. He loved order, respected justice, and was always polite. His tastes inclined him to solitude, study, and reading. Well fitted to shine in society, he only lent himself to it reluctantly. His conversation was solid, but at the same time lively and full of anecdote; his manners nobly familiar and polished; his bearing open and candid.'

No doubt this portrait errs on the side of flattery. The Duc du Maine had many excellent qualities, but he was not endowed with 'all the virtues.' Ambition and apprehension struggled in him for the mastery. Had he been left to himself, his natural timidity would probably have gained the upper hand and kept him in the background; as it was, the affection of Madame de Maintenon and the vanity of a daring and masterful wife were continually

pushing him forward towards heights which he half longed, half feared to climb. He was assiduous in his attendance on the king; his wife, a grand-daughter of the great Condé, seldom left Sceaux, where, surrounded by a little court of *beaux esprits*, she spent a deal of time and money in converting pleasure into a burden.

His brother, the Comte de Toulouse, though less gifted, was more generally popular. A quiet, unassuming, and gentlemanly fellow, he had the rare distinction of holding entirely aloof from the intrigues that went on around him and of living almost without an enemy.

Such was the society in which, after his conversion, Louis sought his chief relaxation from the cares of State. No doubt he did his best to unbend; but to his stiff and formal nature unbending was an impossible feat, and his presence always created round him an atmosphere of constraint. That was the price he had to pay for the 'imposing dignity' which served him so well on public occasions, and which clung to him in private. It must be admitted too that he was arbitrary and not a little selfish. Accustomed to decide what was best for his subjects without fear of contradiction and in the firm belief that he was inspired, he mapped out the existence of his nearest and dearest with equal confidence, and was more than surprised if his plans encountered opposition. His own life went by clockwork. Like most busy men he had early realised the value of method. Each day had its allotted hours for work, social duties, and recreation; each year its appointed periods of sojourn at Versailles, Marly, and Fontainebleau. Towards the close of his life, he became the slave of this self-imposed routine, and nothing annoyed him so much as to have his plans in any way upset.

The conversion of the king had set a new fashion at Court. In 1683 Madame de Maintenon had written to her brother from Fontainebleau, 'I think the late queen has

asked God that the Court might be converted. . . . The ladies who seemed furthest from religion are now hardly ever out of church. Mme. de Montchevreuil, Mesdames de Chevreuse and Beauvillier, and the Princesse d'Harcourt, in a word, all our *dévotes*, are not more regular in their attendance than Mmes. de Montespan, de Thianges, the Comtesse de Gramont, the Duchesse du Lude, and Mme. de Soubise. An ordinary Sunday is now like Easter Sunday.' Probably Madame de Maintenon was writing with intentional sarcasm. If not, she soon discovered her mistake. The Court flocked to services, yawned, and bitterly regretted the merry times of the pre-devotional days. 'The Court is growing so dull,' wrote Madame in 1687, 'that people are getting to loathe it: for the king imagines that he is pious if he makes life a bore to other people. It is hopeless when people refuse to follow their own reasons and are led by interested priests and old courtesans' (a hit at Madame de Maintenon). 'It makes life a burden to honest and sincere folk.'

And, till the Duchess of Burgundy came to infuse new life and gaiety into the daily routine, Versailles remained a dull place for the pleasure-loving youth of France. The day of *fêtes galantes* and *îles enchantées* was over, and courtiers could hardly be expected to display an exuberant enthusiasm over the sermons of Bossuet or the latest additions to the gardens or Trianon, which were now the king's staple interests.

It would have been well for France, if Louis' new-found zeal for religion had stopped at the curtailment of pleasures and the multiplying of devotional exercises. Unfortunately, the new life was inaugurated by an act which will always, and justly, be reckoned as the blackest of his reign. On October 20, 1685, he revoked the Edict of Nantes, and the Huguenots became outlaws. Conversions on a large scale had been taking place at Bordeaux

and in the dioceses of Montpellier, Nîmes, and Lyons. Glowing reports had been sent to the king, and Louis had persuaded himself that Calvinism was abdicating. 'The king,' wrote Madame de Maintenon, 'is very well, thank God, and rejoicing at the couriers who are continually arriving and announcing millions of conversions.'

The atrocities which accompanied the Revocation, though they had the approval of the bishops, shocked the better consciences of the time. Saint-Simon, a devout Roman Catholic, who spent a yearly retreat amongst the Trappist monks, expresses his horror in biting words. 'The monarch never doubted the sincerity of these conversions *en masse*; the converters took good care to persuade him of their genuineness and to beatify him in advance. He swallowed the poison greedily. Never had he appeared to himself so great in the eyes of men, so pleasing to God, or so conspicuously engaged in the work of atonement for the sins and scandals of his life. He heard nothing but eulogies, whereas all real and genuine Catholics and the best of the bishops groaned in their hearts at seeing the orthodox employ against the errors of heresy the same methods with which pagan and heretical tyrants had persecuted the truth and the martyrs.'

It is probable that the one man in France who never realised the brutality of the new crusade was Louis himself. Not gifted with a vivid imagination, and cut off by his isolated position from all access to facts that did not happen immediately under his eyes, he saw what he was allowed to see and heard what it was thought good for him to hear. He was not naturally cruel; nobody was more easily moved to tears, and he could be generous even to a heretic.[1] To the end of his days he never doubted that

[1] *E.g.* Ruvigny was allowed to keep his property in France, even though he had entered the service of the Prince of Orange; and it was not till he had served in several campaigns against his country and received repeated warnings that the concession was cancelled.

the majority of the Huguenots were grateful for the kindly pressure which had brought them back to the true fold, and that the few who had suffered belonged to an impossible type of mind, that was equally hostile to God and to good government. The intention was completely in harmony with the spirit of the age which witnessed the massacre of the Piedmontese and the Five Mile and Conventicle Acts. It is improbable that the deed would have been perpetrated if religious intolerance had not been fortified by other and more secular considerations. It has always been the fate of religion to be called in to give a sanction to political crimes. To Louis, as to the British Parliament, Dissent was not only a perverted conception of faith but a dangerous political force incompatible with good government—'No bishop, no king.' It was Louis' misfortune that, though his motives were equally unsound, his measures were more effective than those of our own Government. For the Revocation of the Edict of Nantes was a gigantic blunder as well as a crime. It depopulated a quarter of the kingdom, ruined its commerce, sent the secrets of its manufactures into other lands, and deprived France of the very men who a century later might have steered the Revolution into smoother channels. Nothing can excuse it. But perhaps the world cannot yet afford to throw too many stones. It is true that we no longer try to force our creeds and dogmas down reluctant throats at the point of the bayonet. It is to be hoped that we have acquired a truer insight into the spirit of our religion; certainly we have learned by experience that diversity of religious belief is not incompatible with political unity. Our intolerance takes other forms, and shows itself rather in our impatience of competing ideals of civilisation than in our attitude towards rival religions. The modern empire does not have recourse to violent measures on behalf of an abstract principle of faith; but it is apt to

imagine that it has a mission to impose its language, its form of government, its commercial system, and its conception of the duties of the State to the individual and of the individual to the State, on alien peoples, who must be coerced if they cannot be persuaded. The instinct for liberty and the passion for uniformity, which are at the bottom of the Aryan character, have hardly yet adjusted their rival claims; and, though we rightly condemn the bigotry of the seventeenth century, it is possible that, when posterity sits in judgment on the Europe that we know, it will discover in some of the developments of modern policy the workings of the same spirit that demanded the Revocation of the Edict of Nantes.

But it was not only the Huguenots who felt the king's heavy hand. Difference of opinion within the fold received no more mercy than schism. Louis was no theologian and had a very imperfect knowledge of the points in dispute, but, like most ignorant people, he had a profound reverence for the official way of thinking, and heterodoxy with him was synonymous with depravity. It is easy for a man, even for a good man, who is not compelled by the circumstances of his life to rub shoulders with those who differ from him on important questions, to develop, for opinions of which he disapproves, an intense hatred, which has all the attractiveness of a righteous indignation and which is easily transferred from the opinions to the people who hold them. Such a hatred Louis felt towards the Jansenists. It was of no avail that Jansenism had produced some of the most learned and pious men of the day. A mere suspicion of the odious taint was enough to wreck a man's career at the Court of this most orthodox of monarchs. The Duc d'Orléans, of regency fame, used to tell a story which, if not verbally accurate, nevertheless bears the stamp of dramatic truth. He had been appointed to the command in Spain and, in the course of a private

interview, Louis had asked him whom he intended to take with him. The Duc d'Orléans had mentioned among others a certain Fontpertuis. 'What! my nephew,' exclaimed the king, visibly moved; 'the son of that mad woman, who followed M. Arnauld everywhere? a Jansenist?' 'On my word, sire,' replied the duke, 'I know nothing about the mother; but as for the son—he a Jansenist? Why he doesn't even believe in God!' 'Is it possible?' replied the king; 'are you sure? Of course, if that is the case, it doesn't matter, and you can take him with you.'

It is to Louis' credit that, in the case of a few individuals whose worth he had learned to value from personal experience, his human instincts were stronger than his religious scruples. Pomponne survived the taint of Jansenism, as Beauvillier and Chevreuse survived the charge of Quietism. But, where his judgment was no longer tempered by personal knowledge, he gave free play to his intolerance. His last and cruellest persecution was directed against the harmless nuns of Port-Royal des Champs. This convent, which was a hotbed of the hated creed, had long been an object of suspicion and dislike; for the notoriously saintly life of its inmates made it a justification of Jansenism. Père la Chaise, the Jesuit confessor of the king, had been content to extinguish it slowly by refusing to allow the nuns to admit any new members into the order. But his successor, Père le Tellier, was impatient of such dilatory methods. On the night of October 28, 1709, in pursuance of a royal decree, the convent was surrounded by detachments of the French and Swiss guards, and, on the following morning, d'Argenson, chief of police, arrived with squads of the Paris Archers. He had the doors opened, summoned all the inmates to the chapter-house, and showed them a *lettre de cachet*. In a quarter of an hour the poor nuns, packed

into carriages and guarded like criminals, were being despatched in groups to their new destinations, ten, twenty, or even fifty leagues distant, where fresh trials and persecutions awaited them. When the place had been cleared, d'Argenson searched it from attic to basement and seized whatever he considered worth seizing. Then the buildings were demolished till not one stone was left upon another; the bones of the dead were removed from their resting-place and reinterred without ceremony in a neighbouring cemetery; and the site of what had once been a peaceful harbour of refuge to many gentle and pious souls was brought under the plough.

Though Louis was the champion of orthodoxy, he was jealous of clerical interference and never dreamed of waiving his temporal rights. No ecclesiastic was ever admitted into the Council of State after Mazarin's death; and not only did he appoint his own bishops but he insisted on their dependence upon himself. No cardinal might wear his hat in France till he had received it from the hands of the king, and no bishop might communicate with the Pope without the royal permission. The Archbishop of Arles received a sharp reprimand for an unauthorised correspondence with the Pope about some relics; and Cardinal Le Camus, who had accepted the red cap directly from the hands of the Papal courier, was confined to his diocese of Grenoble for the rest of his life, and forbidden even to journey to the conclave which met to elect the successor of Innocent XI.

The Revocation of the Edict of Nantes and the destruction of Port-Royal des Champs would seem to be the work of a man without scruples and without pity. It is interesting, therefore, to find that Louis was not inaccessible to remorse, even for an action which modern standards would probably palliate, if they did not wholly justify it. For Louis was never happy about the sack of the

Palatinate, which had been mainly the work of Louvois. He had always prided himself on conducting war in a generous and chivalrous spirit, and his smouldering discontent with a policy, to which his enemies had applied the epithet of barbarous, was fanned for one moment into the white heat of passion in a memorable scene which is infinitely to his credit. 'Louvois, not satisfied with the terrible work in the Palatinate, was anxious to burn Trèves as well. He proposed it to the king as more necessary than anything that had been done at Spire or Worms, pointing out that the enemy would certainly use the place as a stronghold, and that its position would make it far more dangerous to France than the two fortresses which had been already destroyed for similar reasons. The dispute waxed warm; but Louis refused to be convinced, and Madame de Maintenon, who shared his scruples, supported him in his refusal.

'A few days afterwards, Louvois, who was excessively obstinate and accustomed to get his way in the end, came to work as usual with the king in Madame de Maintenon's room. When the business in hand had been dispatched, Louvois informed his master that he sympathised with the scruples which had restrained him from ordering a measure so necessary for the State as the burning of Trèves; that he felt he should be doing him a service by taking the responsibility upon his own shoulders, and that consequently he had, on his own initiative, despatched a courier to Trèves with orders to burn the town immediately.

'The king was habitually calm even under the most trying circumstances; but on this occasion he lost for a moment his self-control. Seizing the tongs, he rushed at Louvois, and would have struck him, had not Madame de Maintenon flung herself between the two men, crying, "Ah, sire, what are you about to do?" and snatched the weapon from his hands. Meanwhile, Louvois was making

for the door, and the king cried after him with flaming eyes, "Send off a courier at once to cancel the order, and see that he arrives in time. If a single house is burned, you shall answer for it with your head." [1]

As a matter of fact, though Louvois had had a courier in readiness to start with the fatal order, he had been prudent enough to delay the man's departure until he had seen how the king took the news. Needless to say, after the foregoing scene he promptly recalled the despatch. But the king always believed that the first courier had started and that a second had overtaken him by dint of hard riding.

Louis, as has been already said, chose his Ministers from the ranks of the *petite noblesse*, for his theory of government required that they should be entirely dependent on himself—the mere instruments of his policy. Men whose fortunes were bound up with the royal favour were less likely to take an independent line than a Rohan or a Guise, and could be dismissed if necessary without fear of vexatious consequences. Louis always imagined that his was the master mind which shaped and moulded the thoughts of his subordinates. In reality the parts were often reversed. The task of governing a kingdom single-handed was beyond his limited capacity, and, skilfully handled, he could be made to follow where he thought that he was leading. His ministers kept him busy with a mass of detail, for which he had special aptitudes, but held the main threads of policy in their own hands, suggesting to him, when occasion required, the ideas which he subsequently regarded as his own. If he had had the gift of choosing the best men, the plan might have worked successfully; but Louis was just clever enough to be afraid of clever people, and he preferred to deal with men whom he considered inferior to himself in ability. With such

[1] Saint-Simon.

men he felt at his ease, and, having no cause to fear them, he insisted that all business of State should pass through their hands. This habit of never discussing political questions with anyone who was outside the official circle entailed disastrous consequences. Hardworking as he was, Louis could not effectively control the various State departments, and, cut off by his own act from outside criticism or advice, he was completely in the hands of his Secretaries of State, who, within certain limits, could lead him at their own discretion.

From ministers to whom he was attached by habit he would stand much, and even surrender his better judgment to their importunities. He sometimes felt and regretted his weakness. No custom was more fatal to good government than that of *survivances*, by which a favoured individual was allowed to purchase the right of succession to an office or charge, either for himself or for his heirs. In the case of the merely decorative posts, such as those of grand-chamberlain or master of the wardrobe, no great harm was done. But it was a very different matter when a Secretary of State retired and the monarch found that, in the appointment of a successor, his hands were already tied by a rash concession. To cancel the bond was to do injustice to the purchaser, who had often paid a large sum for the privilege; to acquiesce was to sacrifice the public good to private interests. Louis disliked *survivances* and had wisely resolved never to allow them in the departments of State. But his good nature proved stronger than his principles, and both Louvois and Chamillart were allowed to treat their posts as personal and private property. Chamillart's claim was bought off, at a time when money was scarce and the treasury empty; but it was in virtue of such a compact that Louvois was succeeded in the Ministry of War by his son Barbesieux, a young man of no experience.

It is characteristic of Louis that he followed least the advice of his ablest minister. Colbert, the enemy of waste, made repeated but fruitless efforts to check the royal extravagance. Louis listened to him courteously and read his memoranda with care; but he ignored the proffered advice, and the minister had to bear the odium of a policy which he had done his best to check. When he died, in 1683, his coffin had to be protected by a detachment of the royal footguards from the fury of the populace who would have torn the corpse in pieces, and the chapel in which he was buried was placarded with insulting pasquinades.

Louvois, his successful rival, an able but unscrupulous man, flattered the king's weakness and enhanced his own importance by plunging the country into a state of perpetual war. Convinced that he had made himself indispensable, and impatient of contradiction, he became, as time went on, too careless of the means he employed to bring Louis into line with his own views; and his self-confidence brought about his disgrace. The dispute over the fate of Trèves had done much to shake his credit, and an incident which occurred during the siege of Mons completed his ruin.

'The king prided himself on his knowledge of military detail. One day, as he was walking through the camp, he came upon a cavalry outpost faultily placed, and himself corrected the mistake. Passing by the same place in the afternoon, he found the outpost back in its original position. Surprised and annoyed, he asked the captain who had placed him there; and the officer replied that it was Louvois, who had passed by after the king. "But," replied Louis, "didn't you tell him that it was *I* who had changed your position?" "Yes, sire," replied the captain. The king turned angrily to his *suite* and said, "Isn't that just

like Louvois? He thinks he is a great general and knows everything!"'[1]

'From this moment the king's coolness to his minister became so marked that Louvois could not fail to notice it, and his apprehensions were aroused. One day he was driving the Maréchale de Rochefort and Mme. de Blansac in a light carriage through the park of Meudon, holding the reins himself. By and by he fell into a sort of reverie and began to think aloud. Several times the ladies heard him say, "Will he do it? Will they make him do it? No; and yet . . . No, he won't dare to." And so absorbed was he in his reflections that, if the Maréchale had not suddenly snatched the reins from his hands, he would have driven the party straight into one of the artificial lakes.'[2]

A sudden death saved him from the disgrace which was imminent. He was taken ill one afternoon in July, 1691, as he was working with the king in Madame de Maintenon's room. He just had time to regain his own apartment[3] on foot, and there expired. As was usual in such cases, there were sensational stories of poison; but it is practically certain that death was due to hæmorrhage of the lungs.

A few hours later the king was walking on the southern terrace, which overlooks the Orangerie and is itself commanded by the upper windows of the Hôtel de la Surintendance where the former minister was lying dead, when a messenger arrived from James II. at St.-Germain to condole with the monarch on his sudden and unexpected loss. 'Sir,' said Louis in the most indifferent tones, 'give my best thanks to the King and Queen of England, and tell them that my interests will not suffer in any way.' This was the only public allusion which Louis made to the

[1] Saint-Simon. [2] *Ibid.*

[3] In the Hôtel de la Surintendance, adjoining the end of the south wing of the palace.

death of his minister. There is no reason to suppose that he had intended, as Saint-Simon believed, to send Louvois to the Bastille or that the warrant had been signed; but, undoubtedly, he regarded the sudden death of the obnoxious minister as a release. It saved him the odium of a dismissal and a disagreeable scene.

Equally characteristic of Louis was the fact that, of all his ministers, he was personally most attached to the one who was least capable. Chamillart had first made the acquaintance of his sovereign at the billiard-table. He was an honest, painstaking man, but quite unequal to the double burden of war and finance with which Louis saddled him on the death of Louvois, in order to avoid friction between the two departments. He repaid the king's confidence with an entire devotion. Saint-Simon, who knew him intimately, says of him that, '*Il aimait le roi comme une maîtresse.*' But affection could not make up for lack of capacity, and his tenure of office was marked by a long series of military disasters and growing financial difficulties. Louis clung to him tenaciously through years of defeat; but, after Oudenarde and the loss of Lille, he had to sacrifice him to the public clamour. The fall was softened by such marks of personal esteem as few unsuccessful ministers have received from their sovereign.

Amidst the gathering clouds which overshadowed the last twenty years of his life the king had found one ray of unexpected sunshine in his own immediate circle. As a political speculation the marriage of the future Dauphin[1] to the daughter of the Duke of Savoy had proved a failure; for the duke joined the European alliance and became a thorn in the side of a harassed France. But, from the moment when he first set eyes on her, the king was fascinated by the charming bride. She brought into the stiff and formal gatherings in the private *cabinet* an atmosphere

[1] Louis duc de Bourgogne, the king's grandson.

of youth and gaiety, and something of that *joie de vivre* which makes the old feel young again. With an affectionate nature and pretty coaxing ways she combined a consciousness of her power to charm which made her unafraid of the king even in his severest moods. There were times when she had to pay rather dearly for her ascendency. Louis was not happy without her ; wherever he went the Duchesse de Bourgogne must go too ; and, as he was not in the habit of consulting the convenience of anybody but himself, her movements had to be regulated by his caprices, sometimes not without considerable risk to life or health. In 1706, when the approaching confinement of the duchess made a long journey inadvisable for her, Madame de Maintenon had the greatest difficulty in staving off the autumnal visit to Fontainebleau. She did not dare to show her hand openly. Various pretexts were invented for keeping the king busy in the neighbourhood of Versailles, and the journey was put off from week to week, till at last the lateness of the season made it altogether impossible. Louis, who was quite unconscious of the manœuvres of which he was the object, was annoyed at the final result and showed his displeasure for several days.

Worse still was his behaviour over one of the weekly visits to Marly in the spring of 1708. The duchess was once more in an interesting condition. Marly was only a short drive from Versailles, but Fagon had expressed an opinion that the journey would be dangerous, and Madame de Maintenon was anxious. Under these circumstances it might have been supposed that the king would either have abandoned the visit altogether or have left the duchess at Versailles. But Louis had never been accustomed to have his plans interfered with by similar considerations. The queen and his mistresses had always accompanied him in all states of health, and he could not enjoy Marly unless the princess were there. In answer

to the remonstrances of his womankind he put off the visit twice; but on the third occasion he was firm, and the Duchesse de Bourgogne was placed in a carriage and driven to Marly. 'On the following Saturday, after Mass, the king was amusing himself at the carp-pond, between the Château and the Perspective,[1] with some members of the Court, when the Duchesse du Lude was seen advancing in his direction, alone, and with a face that betokened serious news. The king hastened to meet her, and after a few words rejoined his companions at the pond. "The Duchess of Burgundy has had a miscarriage," he said. Whereupon M. de Bouillon, the Duc de Tresmes, and the Maréchal de Boufflers, began to murmur their sorrow in an undertone, while M. de la Rochefoucauld expressed his fears aloud that, as a similar misfortune had occurred once before, the present accident might destroy all hope of future motherhood. "And supposing it should be so," cried the king with a sudden burst of anger, "what difference would it make to me? Hasn't she already got a son? And if he died, isn't the Duc de Berry of an age to marry and have children? I don't care who succeeds me: they would in any case be my grandsons." Then he added impetuously, "Thank heaven it has happened, since it had to be! and I shan't have my journeys and my plans upset again by the representations of doctors and the arguments of matrons."'[2]

Although such words reveal a deplorable egotism, it would be unfair to lay too much stress on them, or to forget that, with selfish and arbitrary natures, a consciousness of wrongdoing sometimes displays itself, at the first blush, in extraordinary ways. Temper, even when savage and repulsive, is often the sign in certain characters of an uneasy conscience; and, when the psychological moment

[1] A building, masked by trees, which lay to the right of the Château.
[2] Saint-Simon.

had come, the king was not incapable of acknowledging his faults. 'You have no idea,' said Madame de Maintenon in 1707, 'how gentle the king is. I can use a greater freedom in speaking to him about his faults than I can with a thousand others. For instance, a few days ago I said to him, about an important matter, "Sire, what you have done is bad, and you have acted very wrongly." He received my rebuke marvellously well, and even humbly. The next day we were forced to speak again of this matter, and I tried to glide over it gently, saying, "What is done is done, and it is no use thinking of it." He replied: "Do not attempt to excuse me, Madame; I am very much to blame."'

The truth seems to be that, though in the greater vexations and trials of life the king often showed an admirable self-restraint, he was easily put out by little things. He was, above all, inexorable on small points of etiquette, and any breach of what he considered the laws of decorum excited in him an indignation that was sometimes ludicrously out of proportion to the nature of the offence.

At Marly the rigid observance of precedence, which was obligatory at Versailles, was somewhat relaxed, and the more good-natured of the great people did not stand quite so much on their dignity. One day at dinner, Mme. de Torcy, wife of the Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs, had seated herself next to Madame, when the Duchesse de Duras entered and came to the same side of the table. Mme. de Torcy pressed her to take her place, but the duchess politely refused the offer and sat down below her. Shortly afterwards the king came in, and immediately fixed his eyes so sternly on Mme. de Torcy that she became embarrassed and once more entreated the Duchesse de Duras to change places, but without effect. All through the meal the king, who hardly withdrew his eyes from the two

neighbours of Madame, said little, and that in so irritable a tone that it was patent to everybody that something had excited his extreme displeasure. After dinner he retired, as usual, with the privileged few to Madame de Maintenon's sanctum; and there, no sooner had he sat down than he gave vent to his pent-up feelings. He said 'that he had just been witness of a piece of impertinence which had made him so angry that he had been unable to eat; that such audacity would have been intolerable in a lady of quality and good birth, and that in a little *bourgeoise*, a daughter of Pomponne, whose real name was Arnauld and who had married a Colbert, the thing was simply incredible; that he had been several times on the point of ordering her to leave the room, and had only been prevented from doing so by his respect for her husband.'[1] It was in vain that the Duchesse de Bourgogne and the other princesses tried to calm him and make excuses for the lady on the ground of her youth and inexperience. He could talk of nothing else for four whole days, and Torcy had the utmost difficulty in procuring his wife's pardon, in spite of the most humble apologies.

Power, flattery, and an undisciplined childhood, had all combined to make Louis selfish, and, though punctiliously courteous to his subjects and considerate to his inferiors, he was, perhaps unconsciously, sadly indifferent to the prejudices or convenience of his familiar friends. It is necessarily difficult for a monarch to distinguish what it is his duty to claim as a sovereign from what he ought to sacrifice as an individual. De la Rochefoucauld, the one companion of his youth for whom the king retained a real affection, had to pay for the distinction by a complete loss of liberty. For forty years he did not 'sleep out' more than twenty times, and he had to ask for leave of absence even if he wished to attend a dinner-party or to miss the

[1] Saint-Simon.

royal walk. Madame de Maintenon herself, though treated on the rare occasions when she appeared in public with an almost exaggerated deference, had often to suffer in private from a similar want of consideration. She had a more than German horror of draughts. Even on the hottest days the windows of her carriage or her bedroom were kept hermetically sealed. Louis, on the other hand, loved fresh air and hated stuffy rooms. Frequently on entering his wife's apartment his first act was to walk up to the windows and throw them open, even when the unfortunate lady was ill in bed with fever. This circumstance lends a touch of pathos to a remark, already quoted, of Madame de Maintenon's, who, when holding forth to her *protégées* at Saint-Cyr on the hardships of matrimony, had complained feelingly that a wife was not even allowed to shut her own windows.

Madame de Maintenon, who had perhaps studied the king more closely and more shrewdly than anybody else, observed that his anger 'grew by reflection,' and that his first outburst of passion was less dangerous than his studied and convinced resentment. His self-control was indeed remarkable, and there is only one recorded occasion on which he completely forgot his dignity in public. It happened at Marly in 1695. The king had just heard of the ridicule which his favourite bastard[1] had incurred in Flanders through his want of military capacity and his apparent deficiency in personal courage; and the news had caused him bitter mortification. As he was leaving the dinner-table, in the presence of all the ladies and courtiers, he noticed that one of the valets who were removing the dessert was in the act of putting a biscuit into his pocket. In a moment his passion blazed up; he rushed at the offender, rated him soundly, and struck him across the shoulders with the cane he was carrying, till the

[1] The Duc du Maine.

weapon, which was a very light one, broke in his hand. Then, still muttering abuse, he passed through the group of silent and dismayed spectators to Madame de Maintenon's room. An habitually self-restrained man, who has yielded unexpectedly to a sudden passion, is tempted to find excuses for his action and can seldom bring himself at once to acknowledge his fault. It was only natural therefore that when, an hour later, he met his confessor, Père la Chaise, Louis should try to carry off the slip with a show of confidence. "Father," he said aloud, "I have given a scoundrel a good thrashing and broken my cane over his back; but I don't think I have offended God." To avoid irritating the king, the confessor murmured something that might be taken for approval; but there can be little doubt that Louis was duly rebuked for his temper in private, for Père la Chaise was no coward.

There was much to try the patience of the monarch in the early years of the eighteenth century. Abroad, defeat after defeat; Blenheim followed by Ramillies, Oudenarde, and Malplaquet; French territory invaded; his grandson[1] all but driven from the Spanish throne; and peace only to be obtained on the most humiliating terms. At home, poverty and discontent, and the suffering increased by inclement seasons. In the first weeks of 1709 winter set in with exceptional severity. 'It has never been so cold,' wrote Madame, 'within the memory of man; every morning one hears of people who have been found frozen to death, and partridges are picked up dead in the fields. All the theatres are closed as well as the law courts; neither presidents nor councillors can sit in their courts on account of the cold.' And frost was followed by famine. 'One cannot go out,' wrote the same princess in October, 'without being followed by crowds of poor people who are black with hunger. The dearth is frightful. Everywhere

[1] Philippe V.

one sees people dropping, literally dead of starvation. One hears nothing but lamentation and groaning from the lowest to the highest.' In Paris a serious riot among the starving artisans was only prevented from becoming dangerous by the tact and courage of the Maréchal de Boufflers; and in the country things were no better. In May of the same year Madame de Maintenon, writing to the Abbess of Gomerfontaine, observed: 'You will be disappointed not to have Mlle. d'Aumale with you; but she and I are both afraid of some unpleasant adventure on the road. The dread of famine has made the common people so excited that it is not safe to face them.'

When the wolf was prowling round the doors of the overtaxed peasants, it was not likely that money would flow freely into the royal treasury; yet money was absolutely necessary, no longer for foreign conquest, but to defend the soil of France. The king pawned his jewels and sent his gold plate to the mint. Whatever could be converted into current coin followed the same path, and the courtiers, secretly murmuring at the sacrifice which they were compelled to make, did not dare to refuse the offer of their own silver, and learned to eat off china and earthenware. Madame de Maintenon remarked bitterly of their self-denial that, though they complained of being ruined, they did not economise in their dress. And, during all this time of distress, while the poor were dying at their doors, the nobles did not alter their mode of life or sacrifice a single pleasure. They could always find money for cards.

Louis himself was greater in adversity than he had been in the days of his prosperity. Whatever his secret thoughts might be, his outward demeanour was calm, dignified, and confident. He cut down a few of the expenses which his lavish hospitality had entailed, and his guests at Marly no longer received their board gratis; but he would do nothing to show his enemies how low they

had brought him, and the balls at Marly, in the January of 1709, were deliberately intended as a challenge to his foes and a proof to the world that France was not dismayed. As long as he could, he clung tenaciously to the belief that the war was popular and that his people were with him heart and soul. Like all men who have drunk the poison of flattery, he loved to be duped. In 1705, losses in the field rendered a fresh levy of 25,000 men necessary, and the exhausted provinces were in despair. But Louis believed the flattering stories that were told him of universal eagerness to serve, and repeated them fatuously to others; and, to clinch his convictions, some carefully selected and well-paid conscripts were brought to Marly and charmed him with their fictitious enthusiasm.

But after 1709, in spite of the generous response which France had made to the king's appeals, it was impossible for the most credulous of optimists to be deceived any longer; and the tears which he would sometimes shed in the privacy of Madame de Maintenon's room were a truer indication of Louis' secret feelings than the face of unruffled calm which he displayed to his Court. Madame de Maintenon was a stern comforter. 'You are right, madame,' she wrote to the Princesse des Ursins, 'in thinking that we must look at all that is happening to us as sent by God. Our king was too proud; God wishes to humble him in order to save him. France had pushed her conquests too far, and perhaps unjustly; he wishes to confine her within narrower limits, which, perhaps, will be all the more secure. Our nation was insolent and unbridled; God wishes to punish and humiliate us.'

But the crowning trials came, not from the enemy, but from the hand of death. It was Louis' misfortune not only to outlive his own generation but to see his children and grandchildren sink one by one into the grave, his son in 1711, the Duc and Duchesse de Bourgogne and their

eldest boy in 1712, and the Duc de Berry two years later. In 1714, of all that band of young and happy faces which had once surrounded the throne and made the succession apparently secure, there was none left but the Duc d'Anjou, a sickly child still in the nursery. In this sudden and startling isolation, Louis, yielding to family pressure, made the fatal mistake of raising his bastard sons to the succession. A will, containing secret clauses to this effect, was handed over to the Paris Parliament for safe keeping. Probably the king hardly thought that his wishes would be ratified. In any case, the Parliament set them aside when the will was opened and the monarch who had made it was no more.

It is impossible to contemplate the last three years of this long reign without a feeling of genuine pity and respect for the lonely monarch. There was something almost heroic in the way in which he forced himself to live up to his ideal of kingship. He had steered the ship of State amongst the rocks, but, sad and weary as he was, his hand never faltered on the tiller till death struck him down at his post. Many wiser and better rulers have shown less courage in adversity. No doubt the habit of long years came to his aid; he was so inured to routine that probably he could not have lived without it; and his days were too full to leave him much time for brooding over the past. Councils of state, councils of finance, the drive to Marly or Trianon, the long hours of private work with his ministers, and the endless public functions of the Court kept his mind mechanically busy. Nevertheless, life must have been horribly blank, as it always is when the future holds no promise in store. Louis was not an imaginative man; but in spite of the crowds that followed his every movement he must have found the great rooms and galleries of Versailles strangely cold and empty; and, as he went daily to and from the chapel, he must some-

times have felt the bitter mockery of the painted ceilings, where *le roi soleil* in the zenith of his splendour triumphed over his enemies and planted his foot on the neck of conquered Europe.

With the death of the Duchesse de Bourgogne a silence had fallen upon the Court. The days of dance, and *fêtes*, and masked balls, and light laughter, seemed to have vanished for ever. The dreary routine of Court life went on as before, and the survivors of the stricken family met daily in the royal *cabinet* to talk of indifferent matters; but there was no sunshine among the shadows; only the sad grey twilight of a November evening. The king was more than ever in Madame de Maintenon's rooms, and the task of cheating him into a momentary forgetfulness of the past became increasingly difficult. Music was the great resource, and several times a week a band of violins and oboes played familar airs in the great lady's antechamber. Occasionally these same musicians, transformed into actors and personally coached by the king, performed his favourite plays. Molière had been the delight of his youth, and Molière remained the favourite of his old age. Between the December of 1712 and the August of 1715 there were nineteen such performances, amongst which '*Le Bourgeois Gentilhomme*' figured four times, '*Le Médecin malgré lui*' thrice, and '*Georges Dandin*,' '*L'Avare*,' and '*Le Mariage forcé*' twice each.[1]

Death came at last, not very painfully but somewhat slowly. Louis had been no stranger to illness. In 1686 he had been laid up for many months with an abscess on the leg, which had caused him intense suffering and had only been cured at last by a long and painful operation. He had often also been a martyr to gout and compelled to use a kind of bath-chair (*fauteuil à roues*), not only for outdoor exercise but even for getting from

[1] Dangeau.

room to room. Fagon's remedy had been to swaddle him at night in feather pillows, and the treatment was continued after the attacks had ceased. In his later years the king suffered little from his old enemy, but the copious perspiration, which rendered a change of shirt necessary every morning before the Court was admitted to the bedchamber, had reduced him very much in weight and must have been distinctly lowering. The loss of most of his teeth, in 1701, not only changed his appearance very considerably but constituted a real danger to a man who ate so prodigiously as Louis. It is true that he never touched food between meals, and he could defer a meal for hours without being plagued by hunger; but, as he used to observe himself, 'the first mouthful of hot soup opened the gates of appetite,' and he never failed to perform in a way that astonished all beholders. By Fagon's advice he had substituted old Burgundy, mixed with water, for the champagne which had been his ordinary drink at table; and he was also accustomed to take daily a glass of sage or veronica. Conservative in his tastes, he never touched coffee, tea, or chocolate; but he drank a great deal of iced water. Under medical orders he ate much over-ripe fruit, especially melons, at the beginning of every meal. But he was not a good patient, and disliked restrictions on his diet. All his dishes were highly spiced, and he consumed great quantities of sweets and pastry. Fagon used to make faces, and sometimes ventured on a protest to the royal caterers; but they replied that it was their business to feed the king and Fagon's to purge him.

In 1715 his health was failing. Maréchal and his valets noticed the change, but Fagon and Madame de Maintenon were blind. However, in the beginning of August he began to suffer from a pain in the leg, which made standing or walking painful and which was mistaken for sciatica. On August 9 he followed the hunt for

the last time, in his carriage, and showed signs of great fatigue on his return. On the 10th he went for a drive to Marly, and Dangeau, who was present in the evening at his *coucher*, was startled by his extreme weakness. 'He was so exhausted that he could hardly walk from his *cabinet* to his *prie-dieu*,' and his body had become so thin that it looked 'as if the flesh had all been melted off.' On the morning of the 11th, after a council of state he was wheeled in his bath-chair round the gardens of Trianon. It was the last time that he left the palace alive.

For the next few days, though his leg was often painful, he went through his usual routine without any alteration, except that he retired to bed at ten instead of midnight. He was taken daily in his *fauteuil à roues* to hear Mass in the chapel. On the 13th, he took leave in public of the Persian ambassador,[1] standing the whole time. His nights were now beginning to be disturbed; he seldom fell asleep before three or four A.M. and suffered from continual thirst. The doctors disagreed as to whether he were feverish, but they ordered him asses' milk and quinine. A suspicious-looking sore had appeared below the right knee, and the bandages round his leg prevented him from wearing his ordinary clothes; consequently, he heard Mass and transacted state business in bed. But he generally rose at 5 P.M. and was carried to Madame de Maintenon's room to enjoy some music.

On Saturday, August 24, his leg gave him much pain. He dined in bed and held a council of finance; after which he worked alone with the chancellor. In the evening he rose, and the Court was admitted for the last time to see him supping in public, in his dressing-gown; but a recrudescence of pain compelled him to dismiss the spectators before the meal was ended and to hurry back

[1] This ambassador, who subsequently proved to be an impostor, had been made much of at Versailles.

to bed. Certain black spots, which had appeared below the knee, alarmed the doctors and gave grounds for apprehension that the limb was mortifying.

Sunday, August 25, was the fête-day of St.-Louis, and in accordance with a time-honoured custom the king was roused at dawn by the drums and trumpets of the guards playing under his window in the Cour de Marbre. In the morning he added a codicil to his will by which he gave the command of all his household, civil and military, to the Duc du Maine, and thereby considerably lessened the power and authority of the future Regent. At dinner-time the orchestra of twenty-four violins and oboes played in his antechamber,[1] the door of which was left constantly open; and the musicians were expecting to give another concert at 7 P.M. But in the course of the afternoon the king had fallen asleep; and, when he woke up at seven, his pulse was so bad and his brain so clouded that the players were hastily dismissed, and his confessor, Père le Tellier, summoned instead. Louis had quickly recovered complete possession of his faculties, but a shivering fit, and the intuition which comes to dying people warned him that he had entered on the final stage of his illness and that his hours were numbered. He confessed, and received absolution; and at eight o'clock Cardinal de Rohan, accompanied by the curé of the parish and seven or eight lackeys bearing torches, came in with the viaticum and the sacred oils, and the king received the last sacraments of the Church. The ceremony lasted nearly an hour. When it was over, Louis finished the codicil he had been writing and handed it to the Chancellor. He then sent for his nephew, the Duc d'Orléans, and the Duc du Maine, and spoke to each of them separately for some time. After which the curtains of his bed were drawn and he tried to get some sleep.

[1] This room was afterwards known as the Œil de Bœuf.

Monday, August 26, was mainly occupied in saying good-bye. At 10 A.M. the wound was dressed and lanced several times to the bone. While this operation was being performed, Madame de Maintenon knelt alone at the foot of the bed. At noon the dying man sent for the little Dauphin, who was brought in by his governess, Mme. de Ventadour. 'Little one,' said Louis, 'you are going to be a great king; but your happiness will depend on your submission to God and the good that you do to your people. You must avoid war as far as you can, for it is the ruin of nations. Do not follow the bad example that I have set you. I have often begun war too lightly and continued it through vanity. Do not imitate me; but be a peaceful prince, and let your principal care be to relieve the distress of your subjects. Profit by the good education which Mme. de Ventadour is giving you; obey her, and follow also the good advice of Père le Tellier, whom I give you as confessor.' Then, after speaking a few kind words to Mme. de Ventadour, he burst into tears, kissed the Dauphin repeatedly and gave him his blessing. At half-past twelve he heard Mass, and, when the service was over, he called the principal officers of the household to his bedside. 'Gentlemen,' he said, 'I am grateful for your services; you have served me loyally and with a desire to please. I regret that I have not been able to reward you better, but the troubles of recent years have made that impossible. Serve the Dauphin with the same affection that you have shown to me; he is a child of five and may have many trials to endure, for I remember that I had many in my youth. I am dying, but the State is eternal; be faithfully attached to it, and let your conduct be an example to all my other subjects. . . . Obey the orders that my nephew gives you. He is going to govern the kingdom, and I hope that he will rule wisely. I hope that you will do your duty too, and that you will some-

times think of me.' The king then sent for the Duc d'Orléans and recommended Madame de Maintenon to his special care; after which Madame and the princesses were admitted to say their last farewell. They had not the firmness and composure of the monarch, and for the short time that they were present the room was filled with cries and lamentations.

For the next two days, though the patient's strength was ebbing slowly, the disease did not appear to be making any progress, and wild hopes were occasionally entertained that life might still be prolonged. But Louis himself was under no such delusion. His brain for the most part was clear, and his grip of detail and love of method remained with him while consciousness lasted. He had arranged that, as soon as all was over, the Dauphin should be removed to Vincennes, where the air was healthier than at Versailles; but, remembering that the Court had not been there for fifty years, he sent for a small box in which there was a detailed plan of the château, which he gave to Cavoye. Père le Tellier and Madame de Maintenon were constantly at his side. To the latter he remarked once: 'I have always been told that it is difficult to die. For myself, now that I have reached the dread moment, I don't find it difficult.' On another occasion, seeing in a mirror the reflection of two of his servants who were weeping silently at the foot of his bed, he said: 'Why are you crying? Did you think I was immortal? *I* never thought so, and, considering my age, you ought to have been prepared to lose me long ago.'

On Wednesday, the 28th, the inevitable quack appeared with an elixir that would cure gangrene at the most advanced stages. He was a Provençal, named Le Brun, and hailed from Marseilles. After a consultation with the doctors, in which he explained the nature of his drug, Le Brun was allowed to experiment with his remedy, which

had an evil smell and was administered in a glass of Alicante wine. 'I am not taking it,' said the king as he swallowed the nauseous mixture, 'either in the hope or with the wish to get well; but I know that in the condition in which I am one must obey the doctors.' The use of the elixir was continued for three days. Needless to say, though it produced a temporary rally, it did no real good. On the same evening, Madame de Maintenon, who had been constantly by the king's side since his illness began, drove to Saint-Cyr to spend the night there and arrange the many small matters for which her presence was needed, returning on the following afternoon to her post in the sick chamber. On the 29th it was found that the gangrene had spread to the thigh, and on the following day 'the leg was in such a state that it might have belonged to a man who had been dead for six months.'[1] The king could still swallow a little jelly and pure water, but his hands had to be held while the nourishment was administered or 'he would have taken it out of his mouth.' Occasionally he spoke a few words, but life was purely mechanical, and he had little consciousness of what was happening round him. At five in the evening Madame de Maintenon distributed her few possessions amongst her servants, and drove off to Saint-Cyr, never to return.

On Saturday, August 31, the end was very near. The king was in a comatose condition the whole day, and as a last resource the doctors administered 'Agnan's remedy' for small-pox, which had been sent by the Duchesse du Maine. At 10.30 P.M. the almoners were introduced and recited the prayers for the dying. The familiar words struck upon the ears of the dying man and stirred some secret spring of memory, for he repeated the 'Ave' and the 'Credo' several times in a loud clear voice. They were the last words he uttered. At a few minutes after 8.15 on

[1] Dangeau.

the morning of Sunday, September 1, he died without a struggle, within three days of his seventy-seventh birthday and in the seventy-second year of his reign.

The body was exposed to the public gaze for the whole of the Sunday. On the Monday it was opened in the presence of the Duc d'Elbœuf and the Maréchal de Montesquiou and embalmed. The remains were then sealed in a coffin and placed in the largest of the state-rooms, where they remained for a week. The heart was eventually taken to the church of the Jesuits in the Rue St.-Antoine and the intestines to Notre Dame. The body was buried at St.-Denis on September 9, with little ceremony, M. le Duc, the senior Prince of the Blood, being the chief mourner.

So ended one of the longest reigns of history. By many, and especially by the poor, the change of ruler was hailed with feelings of relief. But even the most thoughtless could not fail to be impressed by an event which removed a striking and familiar figure from the scene and closed a stirring epoch. Louis XIV had many of the secondary qualities of greatness—courage, industry, and a stern, though narrow, sense of duty. But the inner light was wanting. The *rôle* for whch he had cast himself required genius for its successful performance, and the moderate intelligence which Nature had given him and his teachers had neglected sometimes failed to rise to the level of common-sense. He was genuinely anxious, for the greater part of his life, that his actions should conform to the divine will, but he had not the acumen to distinguish between the will of God and the wishes of his confessor. Taught in the hard school of adversity, he learned to recognise and lament some of his most glaring faults; but, by a strange irony of fate, his worst crimes were the direct outcome of what, to the very end, he believed to be his most conspicuous virtues.

CHAPTER VII

MADAME DE MAINTENON

The power behind the throne—Her youth—Marries Scarron—Becomes a widow—Governess to Madame de Montespan's children—Quarrels with Madame de Montespan—Purchase of Maintenon—Her plans for retirement—Journey to Barèges—Her brother and his marriage—'Dame d'atour' to the Dauphine—Secretly married to the king—Proselytes—Saint-Cyr—Madame Guyon—Death of Charles d'Aubigné—A day of her life at Versailles—Her affection for the Duchess of Burgundy—Death of the king—She retires to Saint-Cyr—Her death.

BEHIND the king and his Ministers, at the bottom of all failure and of every sudden change in the fortune of individuals, the Court suspected a dark and sinister influence which they personified in Madame de Maintenon. Austerely dressed, the enemy of pleasure and the patroness of *dévots*, she seldom left the small apartment opening on to the queen's staircase, where, inaccessible to all but a privileged few, she was supposed to hold in her hands the threads of policy and intrigue and to weave them into the web of history. No doubt she had her share in shaping the events of her time; but her influence, though great, was neither so unlimited nor so direct as most of her contemporaries supposed. The seclusion of her life (for after 1683 she seldom appeared in public), and the strangeness of her fortunes, combined to give colour to the legend of which she became the centre, and to enhance the mystery of one who to Saint-Simon was '*la vieille fée*' and to Madame '*la pantocrate*.' Moreover, a traditional faith in a king who could do no wrong inclined men to seek in some malign external

influence the cause of his admitted failures. We, who stand in no such awe of Louis, need not be so ready to throw upon Madame de Maintenon the whole blame for his disastrous policy.

Conscious of the part that was attributed to her, she was half amused and half annoyed. She had persuaded herself that power was a burden which she would gladly lay down, but she would probably have been unhappy without it. With a genuine desire to be humble she often begged her subordinates to forget her splendid position and deal with her as if she were one of themselves; but, if they took her too literally, they sometimes had cause to regret their candour. Nevertheless, though capable of managing, she was not a domineering nor, in the ordinary sense of the word, a masterful woman. Nor did her mind range over quite so wide a field of activity as her enemies supposed. Religion and education were her two absorbing interests, and her political ideals hardly soared above a desire to keep the king from relapsing into his earlier vices.

Few people have passed more rapidly from a restricted popularity into a general odium. As Mme. Scarron she was the favourite of a small but cultured society of *beaux esprits*; as Madame de Maintenon she was the gloomy figure who was held responsible for the things men detested most. It is not difficult to account for the change. Witty, refined, good-natured, and even-tempered, she lacked the imagination, the knowledge, and the grasp of general principles which might have made her influence in public affairs a valuable asset. An ideal governess, she was a bad stateswoman. Perhaps if she had been more highly gifted Louis would have admired her less.

Françoise d'Aubigné was born on November 27, 1635, in the prison of Niort. Her grandfather, Agrippa d'Aubigné, a Huguenot follower of Henri IV, had been a sturdy

warrior and author of a 'Universal History'; her father, Constant, was the 'black sheep' of the family, and, after being disinherited by his father and murdering his first wife, he had been imprisoned at Bordeaux on a charge of treason. Here the daughter of the prison governor, Jeanne de Cardilhac, a girl of sixteen, fell in love with and married him, in 1627. In 1628, probably through the influence of his father-in-law, he was released and resumed his adventurous and discreditable life. In December 1632, having joined a band of false coiners, he found himself once more a prisoner in the Château Trompette. His wife, moved to pity by his misfortunes, joined him in his captivity, and in 1634 a son was born, who was destined to be a thorn in the flesh to Madame de Maintenon in the days of her greatness. Constant was subsequently transferred to Poitiers and finally to Niort, where Françoise was born and baptized into the Catholic faith, which was the religion of her mother. Soon afterwards Mme. d'Aubigné, tired of her ne'er-do-weel husband and anxious for the future of her children, left the prison and busied herself with lawsuits which had arisen over the will of Agrippa. Meanwhile, the infant Françoise was left in the charge of her paternal aunt, the Marquise de Villette, a convinced Huguenot, who took a great liking to her niece.

In 1642, on the death of Richelieu, Constant was released from prison, and, obtaining from the Compagnie des Iles d'Amérique the governorship of Marie-Galande, he took his family thither overseas. His death in 1647 brought them back to France, and they landed at La Rochelle in a penniless condition. Mme. d'Aubigné lived for a time on charity, but Françoise, then twelve years old, was once more received with open arms by her aunt de Villette. But her misfortunes were not over yet. Another aunt, Mme. de Neuillant, who was also her god-

mother, denounced to the queen-regent this abduction of a Catholic lamb into the Huguenot fold, and Françoise, by a royal order, was taken away from her friends. Mme. de Neuillant, her new protectress, was rich, but hard and avaricious. Françoise, with a mask fixed on to her nose to preserve her face from sunburn, a book of devotions with passages marked to be learned by heart, and a willow-switch in her hand, was set to watch her aunt's turkeys and prevent them from straying. But, though indifferent to the physical well-being of her niece, Mme. de Neuillant was much troubled about her soul. Françoise, who had been brought up in the Huguenot faith, refused to be converted, and was consequently sent to a convent of Ursulines, first at Niort and afterwards at Paris. From the latter place she wrote a pathetic appeal for help to her aunt de Villette. 'Madame and aunt, the memory of all the kindnesses which you showered on our poor abandoned selves makes me stretch my hands towards you and beg you to use your influence and your efforts to save me from this place where life is worse than death. Oh! madame and aunt, you do not know what a hell this so-called house of God is to me. . . .' But, in face of the queen-regent's decision, Mme. de Villette could do nothing, and the struggle continued till a mistress more enlightened than the others tried a change of treatment. Françoise was allowed to attend or absent herself from religious services at pleasure, and a Huguenot minister was invited to the parlour to argue with a Catholic priest in her presence. To his eternal shame the minister was worsted, and Françoise d'Aubigné became a Roman Catholic.

When her conversion was complete, she rejoined her mother in Paris and shared with her a poor lodging in the Marais, where they lived with difficulty on an income of 200 francs and the work of their hands. It was here, in a petticoat that was too short for her, that she first met

the dramatist Scarron, who was contemplating a voyage to the Antilles for his health and who had called to seek advice from one who knew the islands. Scarron was charmed by the intelligence of the young girl and moved to a feeling of pity that was at least akin to love; and when Mme. d'Aubigné died, with a generosity that did him infinite credit he offered either to marry Françoise or to pay for her support in a convent. Mme. de Neuillant, who was anxious to be rid once and for all of an unwelcome burden, decided in favour of matrimony; and in 1652 the future wife of Louis XIV, then sixteen years of age, was married to the forty-two-year-old and valetudinarian poet.

Scarron—witty, careless, and good-natured—lived *en pension* in the Hôtel de Troyes, and it was here that the young wife first became acquainted with the world of *beaux esprits*, in which she was destined to be a prominent figure. It was natural, but not wholly to her credit, that in the days of her prosperity she never alluded to this early benefactor; indeed, she so far succeeded in blotting out the past from her memory that she could write in after years to her brother as one 'who had never been married'; and an unfortunate reminder from Racine cost the poet the royal favour. Racine, in his old age, was absent-minded and forgetful. 'One unlucky day, when he was in the presence of the king and Madame de Maintenon, the conversation fell on the theatre, and Louis asked how it was that, according to common report, the modern stage had become degenerate. Racine gave him several reasons, and concluded by saying that, in his opinion, the principal cause was to be found in the dearth of good authors and good plays, which compelled the managers to fall back upon old ones, like those of Scarron, which disgusted everybody. The widow blushed, the king became confused, and the sudden silence made the poet conscious of

the pit into which he had fallen.' Madame de Maintenon, in spite of what Saint-Simon says, pardoned the lapse, but the king was less forgiving.

In 1660, from a balcony in Paris, she watched the State entry of the king and Marie-Thérèse. 'Nothing so splendid could be imagined,' she wrote to Mme. de Villarceaux, 'and the queen must have gone to sleep to-night well satisfied with the husband she has chosen.'

In the same year Scarron died. By his marriage contract he had settled 23,000 francs on his wife; but he had muddled away his property. 'M. Scarron,' wrote the widow to her uncle the Marquis de Villette, 'has left me 10,000 francs' worth of assets and 22,000 francs of debts. . . . That is the state of the property of the poor fellow, who always had some chimera in his head and who spent everything he could realise in the hope of finding the philosopher's stone or something equally probable.'

A pension from the queen-regent of 2,000 francs, obtained through the influence of the Maréchal de Villeroy, saved her from absolute penury, and, with her servant Nanon, she withdrew to humble lodgings in Paris, where, simply dressed and unashamed of her poverty, she lived a thrifty but not undignified life.

The stories of improper *liaisons* with influential protectors which are told of this period rest on the forged letters of Beaumelle, the assertions of her enemies, and a spurious letter of Ninon de l'Enclos. They are so entirely out of keeping with her character and with the rest of her life that they need a more solid foundation than scandalous gossip to make them credible. By all accounts, Mme. Scarron in her youth was a handsome woman, but the main secret of her charm lay in the mixture of simplicity and reserve which made her totally different from the ordinary young woman of fashion. She combined, too, with the demureness of the puritan a wit which made her

a match for the most polished talkers of the day. The combination was original and piquant, and it is not surprising that the young widow, who was poor but independent and perfectly at her ease, *dévote* but excellent company in a drawing-room or at a dinner-party, obliging but never cringing, became a welcome guest in some of the most select *salons* of Paris. She was perfectly able to take care of herself and fully alive to the unusual precautions which her position required. Presents of any kind she invariably refused. 'My character in this respect,' she said afterwards in a lecture to her *protégées* at Saint-Cyr, 'was so well known that no man ever dared to offer me anything, except one who was a fool. I had a very pretty amber fan, and I had put it for a moment on a table by my side; this man, either jokingly or on purpose, took up the fan and broke it in two. I was surprised and shocked, and extremely annoyed, for I was very fond of the fan. The next day this man sent me a dozen fans like the one he had broken. I sent him word that it wasn't worth while breaking mine in order to send me a dozen others, and that I should have been just as well pleased with thirteen as with twelve. I sent him back his present and remained fanless, and made such fun of him in public that nobody ventured afterwards to take similar liberties.'

Her independent spirit is well illustrated by a letter she wrote in 1663 to the brother whose weak and invertebrate character was always to be a source of grief and annoyance to her.

'I am extremely vexed with myself for having asked M. de Villette [a cousin] to receive you and put you up. I hear from thirty different sources that you have behaved shamefully and quarrelled with him after accepting all the services that one could expect from a dear brother. I confess that I am extremely vexed with you, and that your conduct has destroyed all the good opinion I had formed

of you. You not only received from him all the necessary things, but you took what he didn't give, and you have accepted money to gamble with. I cannot understand how one can have the heart of a gentleman and behave like that. As I have told you a thousand times, it would be better to wear a threadbare coat and not to play than to secure the wherewithal by means so degrading as those of charity.'

Amongst the friends of Scarron had been the Maréchal d'Albret, and it was at the Hôtel d'Albret that Madame de Montespan and Mme. Scarron first met. The two women were mutually attracted to each other. As yet, no breath of scandal had tarnished the reputation of the beautiful marquise. Indeed, talking of the frailty of Mme. de la Vallière, she had said, 'If I were so unfortunate as to have a similar thing happen to me, I should hide myself for the rest of my life'—a grim warning against the dangers of boastfulness. But the friendship was of the head rather than of the heart, and consequently survived the moral lapses of the favourite; and the intellectual pleasure which Mme. Scarron derived from the conversation of the mistress proved stronger than her puritan disapproval of her conduct. The friendship had important results, for, in 1669, Mme. Scarron was asked to act as *gouvernante* to the illegitimate children which Madame de Montespan had borne to her royal lover. She had scruples at first; but the king, to a good Frenchman or Frenchwoman, stood on a different plane from the ordinary mortal. Her confessor reassured her, and an interview with Louis decided the matter. The utmost secrecy was demanded and observed, and Mme. Scarron's life, for several years, was a hard one. The children were lodged in a small house outside Paris. Thither at nightfall the *gouvernante* used to repair, in disguise and with a basket under her arm, to look after her charges: and sometimes she had

to sit up all night tending some infant malady. 'In the morning I went home, let myself in by a back door and, after dressing, drove to the Hôtel d'Albret, or de Richelieu, in order that my friends might not even suspect that I had a secret to keep.'

In 1673 the king publicly recognised his bastards. The need for secrecy was at an end, and Mme. Scarron's official position brought her into the public eye. Even before this she had been introduced to Versailles, where she had been well received and had enjoyed the honour of a place in one of the carriages that followed the royal *promenade*. 'There were many courtiers round the carriage; M. de Lauzun' (then at the height of his favour) 'talked much with me; and when we got down M. de Turenne continued the acquaintance which you [the Maréchal d'Albret] have established between us.' The king was beginning to take notice of the intelligent but unobtrusive lady, who was so different from the women to whom he was accustomed, and there were many who envied her her favour; but the ensuing years were years of anxiety and annoyance, which find vivid expression in the letters which Mme. Scarron wrote to her confessor, the Abbé Gobelin. Madame de Montespan was jealous of the increasing friendliness between the governess and the king, and her temper suffered. In 1674 she tried to get rid of her friend by marrying her to the aged Duc de Villars, but the refusal of Mme. Scarron to entertain the idea frustrated the plan. 'I am always sad,' wrote Mme. Scarron in the same year, 'and things are taking a shape that doesn't please me.' And again, 'The coldness with which I am treated has increased since you left, and my friends, who have noticed it, have condoled with me on my disgrace. I spoke yesterday to Madame de Montespan about it, and told her that I hoped she and the king would not think that my low spirits were a sign of my being sulky with them. That

the cause was more serious; that I saw clearly that I had lost her favour, and that she had prejudiced the king against me.' In September: 'Madame de Montespan and I had a heated conversation this morning, and as I am the victim I have been crying a good deal, and she has given her own account of the matter to the king. . . . She describes me to him as she pleases, and loses me his esteem. Consequently he considers me an eccentric creature who has to be humoured. I dare not speak to the king directly because *she* would never forgive me; and, if I did speak, my obligations to Madame de Montespan forbid me to say anything against her. So there is no remedy.' And in the February of the next year she writes: 'There have been terrible scenes between Madame de Montespan and myself, and yesterday the king was a witness of one of them. These quarrels are reducing me to such a state that I cannot endure it much longer.'

To add to her troubles, the Duc du Maine was ill and needed constant attention. 'It is always terrible,' she says, 'to see someone whom one loves suffering, and I feel with anguish that I love the child as much as I loved the other one.' [1]

Under the circumstances Mme. Scarron determined to take her wages and withdraw from an impossible position. In the August of 1674 she wrote: 'I am firmly resolved to leave them at the end of the year.' A gift of 250,000 francs, by no means an extravagant reward for her services according to the standards of the time, made it possible for her to realise her wishes. Maintenon,[2] a property that brought in 10,000 to 11,000 francs a year, was bought with the money, and the new possession gave a fresh interest to life. For the first time in her chequered career the daughter of Constant d'Aubigné knew what it was to have a secure future and to enjoy affluence, if not wealth.

[1] The first child of Madame de Montespan and the king: died in 1672.
[2] Maintenon is S.W. of Versailles, about twelve miles short of Chartres.

It is not surprising, therefore, that she was somewhat excited. 'I was more impatient,' she wrote to her confessor in January 1675, 'to tell you about Maintenon than you can be to hear. I was there for three days, which, without exaggeration, seemed like a moment. The house is a fine one, rather too big for the kind of life I contemplate, but in an agreeable situation, and it has *de fort beaux droits*. In a word, I am much pleased with it and should like to be living there. It is true that the king has given me the name of Maintenon.'

Full of her idea of retiring from the Court, Madame de Maintenon, as she now was called, drew up a routine for the new life which she was eager to begin, and submitted it to her confessor.

'I should like to rise at seven in the summer and eight in the winter; to spend an hour in prayer before summoning my maids; then to dress, and while so engaged to see the tradesmen and others with whom I shall have business to transact; and, after dressing, to go to church, and not return till dinner.

'I should expect to go out about two days in the week, either for my pleasure or to pay necessary visits; to sup with private friends on those days, but always to come away at ten.

'Twice a week I should stay at home and entertain my private friends on those days, either at dinner or at supper, always withdrawing at ten to read prayers with my servants, and undressing and going to bed at eleven.

'The three other days of the week I should assign—one to visiting the poor of my parish, one to visiting the hospital, and the third to visiting the prison; and I should spend the evenings working or reading.

'I should never see anybody on the eve or day of Communions; never miss my private prayers; dress modestly, and never wear gold or silver; and give the tenth part of my income to the poor.

'That is how I should like to begin, till religious zeal led me on to better things. I haven't spoken about keeping Sundays and fête-days holy, for I consider that one of the most elementary duties.'

It must be remembered that these resolutions were not intended for public display but for the private eye of the confessor. They were made in all sincerity and bear the genuine puritan stamp. It was in some ways a misfortune that Madame de Maintenon was unable to carry them into effect.

But new developments kept her at Court. The temporary rupture between the king and Madame de Montespan, brought about by a direct appeal to his religious scruples, seems to have inspired her with the belief that Louis was a brand who might yet be plucked from the burning, and that she was the instrument designed by Providence to effect the rescue.

Meanwhile, while Madame de Montespan was withstanding the assaults of Bossuet in Paris and the king was commanding his army in Flanders, Madame de Maintenon had taken the ailing Duc du Maine to Barèges in the hope that he would benefit by the waters. The king had opened a correspondence with her, and no doubt she entertained him with vivacious descriptions of her journey. An extract from a letter she wrote to the Abbé Gobelin shows her in her lighter vein.

'The almoner doesn't see me often, for he travels in the second carriage. But he gains by the separation, and I get much greater pleasure out of seeing him merry or sad, according as the inns are good or bad, than I should by penetrating more intimately into his sorrows. He is proud of himself for not succumbing to the fatigues of a journey which he is making in a comfortable carriage, three hours in the morning and three in the afternoon, with meals ready and awaiting his arrival wherever we stop. I hear Mass before we start in order to facilitate

his breakfast, for he piques himself on having a warm blood and a ravenous stomach. I don't know what his stomach does, but I know that *he* is ravenous. A day or two ago his nose began to bleed while he was saying his private prayers, which gave him a great fright. You may judge from the length of my letter whether or no I am in a good temper.'

The taste of the age required that nature should be improved by art, and in Barèges and the Pyrenees Madame de Maintenon only saw 'a place more hideous than I can describe; and where, to crown our misfortunes, we are freezing. The society is poor, but in spite of it all I am in good health because I have fewer worries and vexations here than elsewhere.' But, if the place proved unattractive, the object of the journey was secured. The Duc du Maine, whom she describes as 'delightful company,' though still slightly lame, was practically cured; and in the autumn of 1675 Madame de Maintenon was able to take him home. On the journey back she found time to hunt up the tombs of the d'Aubignés of Anjou, an ancient family with which she was anxious to trace a connection. In November she reached Versailles, to find that the situation had once more changed. The reconciliation of the king and his mistress was no doubt a keen disappointment, and the hopes of reforming him were on the wane. In June 1676 she wrote to her confessor, 'I am on excellent terms with Madame de Montespan, and I seize the opportunity to impress on her that I intend to leave; she scarcely replies to these proposals. We shall have to see what we are to do when she comes back from Bourbon. Pray God, I implore you, to direct and govern my designs for His glory and my own salvation.'

Madame de Montespan's triumph was of short duration. She was slowly losing her hold on the king; but she fought hard, and the varying phases of the struggle did not add to the peacefulness of Madame de Maintenon's life.

'I cannot sacrifice for the whole of my life,' she wrote to the Abbé Gobelin, 'my independence, my health, and my soul. I am speaking sincerely; however, the moment for changing has not come yet.'

Maintenon was still a solace and a joy, although the number of visitors, which her growing prestige at Court attracted to the place, was a source of annoyance. In 1679 she added to the estate the adjoining *seigneurie* of Pierre, and gave special instructions to her agent 'to take care of the inhabitants, who are in great want,' and to see that they were not allowed to die from cold or hunger during the frost which had set in. This same agent, or rather his sister, received shortly afterwards a sharp rap over the knuckles. Madame de Maintenon was determined to be mistress in her own house, and expected to have her instructions literally carried out.

'I told M. de Guignonville distinctly,' she wrote, 'not to have anything done to the square tower till I had discussed the matter with him. His answer to this is that the workmen are in and that it will soon be finished. I told you to distribute fuel *with* the Curé of Pierre; you do not say anything to him about it till it is all done. These ways do not suit me, and I am too old not to be mistress in my own house. M. de Guignonville and you were accustomed to treat the former *châtelaine* like a child. That is not my disposition. . . . If you wish to continue to be employed in my affairs, big or little, you must, if you please, do exactly as I ask.'

The pill is finally gilded over, not ungraciously.

'You know how fond I am of both of you, and how pleased I am to be brought into such close relations with you. . . . If you are content to serve me in my own way you will find that I am not ungrateful.'

Among the minor worries that helped to harass Madame de Maintenon during these years, the conduct of her brother, who repudiated his debts and tried to play the

grand seigneur, occupied an important place. Through his sister's influence Charles d'Aubigné had been appointed to the governorship of Cognac, a post worth 30,000 francs a year. For a long time (he was now forty-four years old) she had wished to see him married, and had several times, though without success, entered upon negotiations with that object. Charles, who was a weak and indolent man, owed everything to his sister; but perhaps she held the reins too tightly. Few men like to feel that they are being driven in blinkers, and in 1678 Charles took the bit between his teeth and, without a word to his sister, married the daughter of a doctor, a foolish little *bourgeoise* who was fifteen years old. Madame de Maintenon was keenly disappointed, but with characteristic good sense, instead of wasting ink in useless reproaches, she set to work to make the best of a bad bargain, and offered to educate the young wife and fit her for her new position. The newly married couple came to Paris, and, after seeing the bride, Madame de Maintenon bombarded the husband with good advice.

'I hope that you haven't married merely for the sake of marrying, and that you will try to make of your wife a sensible person. . . . Don't prevent her from leading a regular life; don't let her get up late or go out alone, and don't let her play the great lady. Put her in surroundings which will not humiliate her, but which also will avoid the ridicule you will both incur if you try to live above your station. . . . It is quite right that she should dress well; she is of an age when she can wear greens and reds, and she ought not to be untidy; but don't let her spend two or three hours every morning in front of her looking-glass. . . . I think, at present, you would do well to give her an allowance and let her dress herself. She has no idea of expense, but she would learn how to manage, and would see that when she has given too much for a skirt she will have nothing for shoes or ribbons. If she

had not had a completely new outfit I should advise you to give her 1,000 francs a year; but as she is provided for for six months, I think 850 francs will be enough; and you and I can always give her a little present. . . . If you want to live happily with your wife you must not always be together, or you will grow tired of each other. . . . Don't let her be much with Mme. de Fontmort: she will turn her head, talk of nothing but the Court, and pity her for not being a *dame du palais*. Don't let her dress or undress in the presence of men. . . . Don't shock her by coarse language. . . . Don't talk to her about your successes with ladies or about your courage. The other day, in the few moments she was with us, she told us how you were going to fight the English, in the most ridiculous fashion. . . . You will think it strange of me to enter into such details, but experience has taught me that people are often made unhappy by trifles which, recurring every day, end in great aversions. I want you to be happy, and there is nothing I would not do to contribute to it.'

By way of a practical contribution, Madame de Maintenon drew up an estimate of what the expenses of the new *ménage* ought to be, entering into the minutest details.

'Daily expenditure for a family of twelve people (monsieur and madame, three maids, four lackeys, two coachmen, and one valet de chambre):—

	fr.	cents. [1]
Fifteen lbs. of meat a day at 25 centimes the lb.	3	75
Two roasts (*i.e.* fowls)	2	50
Bread	1	50
Wine	2	50
Wood	2	0
Fruit	1	50
Tallow candles	0	40
Wax „	0	50
	14	65

The original sums are calculated in *sous*; I have changed them, for convenience sake, into the modern francs and centimes. It must be remembered that the purchasing power of 1 fr. at this period was equal to about 5 fr. to-day.

'That is roughly your expenditure, which ought not to exceed 15 francs a day, or 500 francs a month. You see I allow an extra 100 francs a month, but with washing, torches, salt, vinegar, verjuice, spices and etceteras, it will come to that. I allow 20 centimes' worth of wine a day for your four lackeys and two coachmen; Madame de Montespan allows that to hers, and if you had wine in your cellars it wouldn't cost so much. I allow a pound of tallow candles a day; there are eight in the pound—one for the antechamber, one for the maids, one for the kitchen, and one for the stables; I can only think of those four places, but as the days are short I allow eight, and if Aimée is economical and knows how to use the ends you can save 1 lb. a week. I allow 40 lbs. of wood, which you will only use for two or three months in the year. You only need two fires, but let your own be a big one. I allow 50 centimes for wax candles: there are six to the pound, which should last you three days. I allow 1 franc 50 for fruit; sugar only costs 55 centimes the pound and you only need a "quartern" for one *compote*. . . . At dinner you will have a good soup with a fowl; you must have all the broth brought you in a big dish; it is excellent in that unconventional way. Without exceeding the 15 francs a day you can have an *entrée* of sausages one day, of veal another, of sheep's tongues a third; and for supper a leg or shoulder of mutton with two good chickens, besides the eternal *pyramide* and the *compote*.

'Altogether your food ought not to cost you more than 6,000 francs a year. I allow 1,000 francs for Mme. d'Aubigné's dress, 1,000 for wages and liveries, 1,000 for rent, and 3,000 for your own dress, opera, and other expenses.

'As I hope that we are going to live near one another for some time, teach Mme. d'Aubigné and her maids to

know my ways—that is to say that, though I am glad to lend, I don't like to have my things spoiled or broken. I have told Nanon to make an inventory of everything, from the velvet bed to the pot-hook. Legois tells me that you have been buying table-linen; have it marked, and see that it isn't changed in the wash. You must talk about all these things in the presence of your wife; she has a look of helplessness which I should like to see disappear.'

In spite, however, of good advice, repeated on many occasions, the marriage proved a failure. Mme. d'Aubigné was too foolish a woman to profit by the instructions of her sister-in-law, and Charles too worthless a fellow to take much interest in his wife. He soon grew tired of her, and they separated. One child was born of the marriage, the pretty little girl who figures with her aunt in Ferdinand d'Elle's picture at Versailles. Madame de Maintenon adopted her, and married her to the Comte d'Ayen, afterwards Duc de Noailles.

In January 1680 Madame de Maintenon was appointed *dame d'atour* to the Dauphine. Her acceptance of the new position marked her growing influence over the king and her definite abandonment of all idea of withdrawing from the Court. It also put an end to the 'scenes' with Madame de Montespan. There was no open breach, and the two ladies still met occasionally; but there was little cordiality in their mutual greetings, especially on Madame de Montespan's side. At the beginning of every month Madame de Maintenon used to hold in her apartment what she called an *assemblée des pauvres*, a charitable 'at home' to which the Court ladies brought their contributions. Madame de Montespan, entering the room on one of these occasions, remarked with intentional irony to her hostess, '*Savez-vous, Madame, comme votre chambre est merveilleusement parée pour votre oraison funèbre!*' Madame

de Maintenon, who was never proof against wit that was unspoiled by coarseness, laughed heartily at this sally.

The Dauphine, prejudiced by Mme. de Richelieu, who had protected Mme. Scarron but disliked Madame de Maintenon, did not take kindly to the *dame d'atour*. 'The Dauphine,' she writes in 1681, 'leads us a melancholy life. . . . Mme. de Montchevreuil and I don't appear to be in favour'; but the open affection of the king, which was to be crowned at the beginning of 1684 by the secret marriage at Versailles, made her independent of the Dauphine's likes or dislikes. In marrying Louis, Madame de Maintenon performed what she believed to be a duty. It is improbable that she ever had any real affection for him as a man. His want of flexibility, his punctiliousness, and, it must be added, his obtuseness, made him a wearing companion for everyday life. But his conversion, as king, was a signal service to the cause of morality and religion, and Madame de Maintenon regarded herself as chosen by Providence to accomplish the miracle. There is no reason to suppose that she ever regretted the step; but there is equally little reason for believing Saint-Simon's sensational story that she was bent on having the marriage declared, and that this catastrophe was only averted at the eleventh hour by Louvois, who clung to the king's knees till he had extracted a recantation. The only evidence adduced in support of the story is the gossip of a lackey who was supposed to have overheard a conversation which took place on the other side of a closed door. Madame de Maintenon had many faults, but she was entirely free from the kind of ambition which appealed most to her contemporaries. Her letters to her brother are full of entreaties that he will not let his head be turned, or pose as a great nobleman. She provided for him suitably, but she never procured him any title. For rank she had an instinctive reverence,

regarding it, as she did, as a divine institution; but, to her mind, it was the duty of everyone to be content with the particular place in the hierarchy into which he or she had been born, and it was as absurd for a d'Aubigné to ape the ways and manners of a duchess as it was for a *bourgeoise* to ape those of a d'Aubigné. 'If I had fifty thousand francs a year,' she had said to her brother at a time when she might have been duchess had she wished it, 'I should not adopt the style of a *grande dame* or have a *valet de chambre*, like Mme. de Coulanges; nor a bed draped with gold.' And when, at the death of the Duchesse de Richelieu, she was offered the superior post of *dame d'honneur* to the Dauphine, she refused it as being too exalted for her rank. Her life in the small apartment which she occupied at Versailles, after her marriage, was simpler and far less luxurious than that of many a *bourgeoise* in Paris. Nanon, the servant and faithful companion of her penurious widowhood in Paris, kept watch and ward over her mistress, as simply dressed as in the days of their poverty. The rest of her household consisted of a cook, a *maître d'hôtel*, and several valets. A pension of 4,000 francs a month,[1] paid out of the king's private purse, sufficed for her personal wants. In addition, she possessed a carriage, and one of the royal coachmen was assigned to it. No member of his family ever cost Louis less, and for anything like state or show she had an instinctive aversion; nature and the straitened circumstances of her youth had made her thrifty, and the royal extravagance, if she could not prevent it, at least received no encouragement from her. 'Marly,' she wrote in 1698 to Cardinal de Noailles, 'will soon be a second Versailles. One can do nothing but suffer and pray. But what will become of the poor people?' And it was, perhaps, her

[1] At the death of Louis XIV this pension was continued by the Regent; it was charged on the man who had the monopoly of tobacco.

consciousness of the disastrous results of the king's prodigality which determined her never to become, in her own person, a burden to the country. But, if she was to carry on her work of saving the king and continue the intimate relations which were necessary for the accomplishment of the task, marriage, after the death of Marie-Thérèse, became necessary. It was the only way of regularising her position and satisfying her conscience. There is no reason to suppose that she ever regarded it in any other light, or wished for an official recognition which would have imposed on her the public duties that were most distasteful to her and have cut her off from the occupations which were the chief interest of her life.

For her own part, she kept the secret well; but her confessor, naturally, had to be taken into her confidence, and the simple man was dazzled. In 1686 Madame de Maintenon had to write to him sharply. 'I implore you to abandon a style you have adopted towards me, which does not please me and may do me harm. I am no more a great lady than I was in the Rue des Tournelles, when you used to tell me the truth about myself so frankly; and, if the favour I enjoy puts everybody at my feet, it ought not to have the same effect on a man who has charge of my conscience. . . . Where shall I find the truth if not in you? and to whom can I be humble if not to you, when I find in all who approach me nothing but respect, flattery, and complaisance? Speak to me and write to me without ambiguities, without ceremony, and, above all, without respect. Don't be afraid of offending me; I wish to save my soul, and I recognise that nobody has greater need of help than I.'

The king was careful to emphasise the peculiar relations that existed between himself and his wife. Plain Madame de Maintenon in public, in private—or what the king chose to regard as private—she was treated with all

the deference due to a queen. At Marly, when she could be persuaded to join the royal walk in her sedan chair, she was the object of a more ceremonious politeness than Marie-Thérèse had ever enjoyed. 'The king would walk beside her chair on foot. Every other moment he would take off his hat, and stoop to say something to her or to reply if she spoke, which she did less often than he; for he had always something to say or some object to which he wished to direct her attention.' Madame de Maintenon, who was probably horribly bored by the whole proceeding, kept the windows of her sedan-chair closed, for she had a great terror of fresh air 'even in the finest and calmest weather'; but, when the king stooped to speak, she would open the window two or three inches, and shut it again as soon as the king had finished his remarks. Sometimes her chair would be deposited on the ground in order that she might contemplate some new fountain or statue, which, considering her disapproval of the royal extravagance at Marly, was not likely to afford her a very lively satisfaction. 'At the end of the walk the king would escort her to the château, take leave of her, and return alone to the gardens.'[1]

To what extent Madame de Maintenon should be held responsible for the Revocation of the Edict of Nantes is difficult to determine. That she approved of it in principle there can be no doubt. To M. de Villette she had written in 1681, 'If God preserves the king, in twenty years there will not be a Huguenot in the kingdom.' Probably she shared the official belief that Calvinism was abdicating; probably, too, she never realised by what methods the conversions that she welcomed were secured. It is certain that the means employed were entirely at variance with her normal instincts and with the principles

[1] Saint-Simon.

which consciously guided nine-tenths of her ordinary actions. To her brother, when he was governor of Amersfort in 1672, she had written: 'I recommend the Catholics to your care and beg you not to be cruel to the Huguenots. We ought to draw people to us by kindness. Jesus Christ has set us the example.' In her dealing with the young, too, she owed her remarkable success to her perception of the truth that force is no remedy, and that obedience is best won by kindness. It is impossible to reconcile her attitude towards the Huguenots with her settled convictions; but others besides Madame de Maintenon have held sound principles on general issues and sacrificed them, almost unconsciously, on particular occasions, when a great prize seemed to be within their grasp. Moreover, she combined in her character several mutually antagonistic qualities which she found it difficult to reconcile in practice. Intercourse with clever people had widened her outlook and sharpened the mordant and ironical wit which was her chief intellectual gift. On the other hand, with her puritan blood she had inherited a good deal of the puritan intolerance. Common sense and bigotry were continually at war for the possession of her soul, and common sense was not always victorious. It is characteristic of unimaginative people (and Madame de Maintenon was one of them) that, though they may love justice and mercy in the abstract, they are capable of cruelty on a big scale; not because they are indifferent to suffering, but because in large questions of policy they do not think in flesh and blood, and are only moved to pity by what they can see with their own eyes.

Nor, apparently, did she ever experience any feelings of remorse for what had been done; for when, in 1697, a memorandum was submitted to her proposing the recall of the exiled Huguenots under specified conditions, she replied with a decided negative and supported her refusal

by arguments which are as detailed as they are unconvincing.

Her own family, who, with the exception of her brother, were Protestants, had also to suffer from the same proselytising zeal. In 1680, as soon as her credit was firmly established, Madame de Maintenon determined to bring the wandering lambs back to the true fold. The young cousins were either voluntarily surrendered or forcibly abducted, distributed in convents, coaxed, petted, and converted. A few of them made some show of resistance; but the prospect of worldly advantages outweighed religious scruples, and neither they nor their parents afterwards bore any grudge against their powerful relative for the drastic way in which she had consulted what she believed to be their interests, temporal and spiritual.

If Madame de Maintenon's interference in matters of conscience was high-handed and arbitrary, her educational efforts were more worthy of respect. She had a passion for managing the affairs of others, whether they were those of her brother or of a peasant on her estate; but her special and peculiar hobby was the education of the young. 'Whenever you are kind enough to praise me for my skill in educating children,' she wrote to Mme. des Ursins, 'I shall swallow the praise greedily, for I really believe that I *do* know a good deal about the subject.' With a vivid recollection of the hardships and trials of her youth, Madame de Maintenon was eager to do something for the needy daughters of her own class. At Saint-Cyr she was able to realise her ambition. This institution, begun in 1685 and completed in 1686, and situated within a few miles of Versailles, may be regarded as the wedding present of Louis XIV to his wife. It cost in all 1,400,000 francs; a large sum—but the Montespan's villa of Clagny had swallowed up more than two millions, and Madame de Maintenon may well have considered that the charitable

object of Saint-Cyr justified the expense. Two hundred and fifty girls, drawn from the *petite noblesse* and divided into four classes, the blues, the yellows, the greens, and the reds, here received their education free. The aim of the institution was to turn out, not nuns, but wives and mothers who would carry into their provincial homes sound principles of conduct suited to their condition of life. The polish of the cultured *salons* and the grand manners of the Court would be quite out of place in girls who were one day 'to live in the heart of the country, to see if the cattle, the turkeys and the fowls were properly tended, and sometimes to lend a hand themselves.' Humility and simplicity were therefore to be the distinguishing virtues of the place, and religion the beginning and end of knowledge. But it was to be a reasonable, practical religion, and not the religion of the convents. For the prudishness that refused to utter the word 'trousers' and blushed at the inclusion of 'marriage' amongst the sacraments, Madame de Maintenon had a healthy contempt. 'Most Christians,' she wrote to a former pupil who had become Prioress at a teaching convent, 'make piety consist in externals, confessions, occasional Communions, long hours in church, the observance of feasts and fasts; but in everything else there is forgetfulness of God, anger, hatred, vengeance, lies, avarice, &c. . . . Teach your children the *duties* of religion. Most people are content if they know the Commandments by heart without understanding the duties that are enjoined. They know, "Thou shalt have none other gods but me," and then worship the Virgin. They say, "Thou shalt not steal," and maintain that there is no harm in robbing the king.' And again: 'If, when a girl leaves the convent, she says that nothing in the world will excuse her missing vespers, people will laugh at her; if she says that a wife does better to educate her children and instruct her servants than to pass

her mornings in church . . . she will make her religion loved and respected.'

Equally wise were her instructions to the *dames de Saint-Louis* who had charge of the girls at Saint-Cyr. 'Don't make favourites,' she says to one; 'favouritism would ruin your pupils and yourself.' To another, who was mistress of the *rouges*, or youngest girls, she writes: 'you speak to your children too unsympathetically and with a vexation and *brusquerie* which will shut you out of their hearts. . . . You must win them by adaptability, encourage them, praise them; in a word, you must employ every means except roughness, which never leads anybody to God.'

All this was admirably sensible. Unfortunately, the practical results were spoiled by a want of imagination in the foundress and a bigotry which, in spite of her better judgment, sometimes took the reins. Madame de Maintenon had a sound view of what religion should mean to her girls, but she tried to build it up on too narrow a foundation. The 'Imitation,' the 'Confessions of St. Augustine,' and the works of St. François de Sales, even when supplemented by Lives of Esther, David, and Solomon, are arid food for young minds, when they are the only food. And nothing secular was allowed at Saint-Cyr; there was no appeal to nature, to art, to literature; no attempt to fortify the spiritual life by healthy intellectual interests. Madame de Maintenon liked clever people; but she was always haunted by the idea that cleverness was wicked, and she was afraid of cultivating the minds of her pupils for fear of corrupting their hearts. Perhaps she was unduly terrified by the results of her one attempt to provide mental stimulus. At her request Racine had written 'Esther,' a drama in which the beauties of style were not contaminated by any association with worldly ideas, and in 1689 the play was produced by the young ladies of

Saint-Cyr before a small but select audience. The girls were terribly nervous; some of them repeated the *Veni Creator* in the wings as a preventive against stage fright, but the performance was an unqualified success. The king was delighted; he insisted on frequent repetitions, and brought in turn all the distinguished people at Court to see the show.

But royal caresses do not foster humility, and theatricals, even when limited to Scriptural subjects, have a way of exciting interests that are not wholly spiritual. In 1691 Madame de Maintenon was in despair. 'The anxiety I feel about the girls at Saint-Cyr,' she wrote, 'can only be repaired by time and a complete change in the education which we are giving them. . . . I have been building on sand. . . . I wanted to give the girls polish, to elevate their hearts and form their reasons. . . . I have succeeded . . . and they have become more proud and haughty than would be becoming in great princesses. They have been too much pampered, caressed, and petted. . . . I do not want to see them humiliated, for the fault is mainly ours. I only want to repair by a different treatment the harm I have done. . . . Everything at Saint-Cyr is becoming a matter of words; we often talk about simplicity, try to define it, to understand it, and distinguish what is simple from what is not. Then in practice they amuse themselves by saying, "Through simplicity I shall take the best place; through simplicity I am going to praise myself; through simplicity I want what is furthest from me on the table. . . ." We must rid our girls of this mocking spirit, which they have learned from me, and which I now know to be absolutely opposed to simplicity. . . . Don't let us preach at them, but let us try the effect of silence.'

In spite of its occasional worries, Saint-Cyr became the chief and most absorbing interest of Madame de

Maintenon's life. Thither she escaped whenever she could be spared from the tedium of Versailles—sometimes as early as seven on a winter morning. There, too, she lectured informally to the various classes, or satisfied discreetly the curiosity of the *dames de St. Louis* about the Court and the royal family.

But it was in connection with Saint-Cyr that she experienced one of the greatest frights of her life. About 1689 she had come under the spell of the Abbé Fénelon, who had just been appointed tutor to the Duke of Burgundy. His saintly life and practical wisdom blinded her for a time to the vein of mysticism which ran through his character, and which was entirely alien to her own matter of fact views on life and religion. He was encouraged to come frequently to Saint-Cyr; his advice was sought on all occasions, and his letters were copied out for the benefit of the *dames de St. Louis*; indeed, Madame de Maintenon was within an ace of making him her 'director,' when the growing infirmities of the Abbé Gobelin forced her to look out for a successor. Through Fénelon's influence, a certain Mme. de Maisonfort had become a *dame de St. Louis*, and her friend Mme. Guyon a constant visitor at Saint-Cyr. This Mme. Guyon, authoress of '*Le Moyen court et facile de faire l'Oraison*' and '*L'Exposition du Cantique des Cantiques*,' was a woman of great personal charm, but at the same time a somewhat hysterical mystic whose doctrines were influenced by the heresy of 'Quietism,' of which Fénelon himself became suspected afterwards. She soon became a power at Saint-Cyr, and her doctrines a disturbing influence. 'Pure love' and 'self-annihilation' are ennobling ideas, but long hours of ecstatic contemplation lead, in practice, to idleness and the neglect of daily duties. Mme. Guyon, too, had trances, in which she became so 'filled with grace' that on two occasions her corset broke; and the example became con-

tagious. In 1694 Godet des Marais, Bishop of Chartres, who had become confessor to Madame de Maintenon and director of Saint-Cyr, sounded a note of warning, and the works of Mme. Guyon were submitted to the Bishop of Châlons, one of the Noailles, afterwards Cardinal and Archbishop of Paris. The result was that Mme. Guyon was driven from Saint-Cyr and became the centre of a violent theological dispute. Bossuet took the field against her and Fénelon espoused her cause. In 1695, partly in the hope of hushing the matter up, and partly with a desire to remove him to a distance, Madame de Maintenon suggested Fénelon's elevation to the vacant see of Cambrai; and Louis, who had not yet realised how deeply the abbé was implicated in the *affaire Guyon*, ratified the appointment.

But in 1697 the publication of the '*Maximes des Saints*' produced a storm. Fénelon was forbidden to leave his diocese, the work was condemned at Rome, and Madame de Maintenon became seriously alarmed. Fénelon's appointment to Cambrai had been chiefly her doing, and his intimate friends at Court, the families of Beauvillier and Chevreuse, had been her chosen companions too. Moreover, Saint-Cyr had attained an uneviable notoriety as a stronghold of the pernicious doctrines. The danger was aggravated by the fact that, in religious matters, she did not always see eye to eye with the king. Louis had a Jesuit confessor and insisted on his children's having one also. Madame de Maintenon, on the other hand, refused to follow the royal example. She was determined that her spiritual adviser should never become her spiritual master, and she had little sympathy with the Order, whose arbitrary ways she detested. Nor did she always conceal her contempt for the king's confessor, Père la Chaise, '*un bon homme sans esprit*,' who, in her opinion, in his recommendations to vacant sees, attached too much weight to

political considerations and too little to personal merit. There were angry scenes, and Madame de Maintenon's alarm is evidenced by the promptness with which she sacrificed her own friends at Court and the adherents of Fénelon at Saint-Cyr. Beauvillier and Chevreuse ceased to be her intimates; Mme. de Maisonfort and two other *dames de St. Louis* were expelled from Saint-Cyr, and the place was thoroughly purged. At last the storm blew over and the king was appeased. The review at Compiègne, in 1698, was the outward and visible sign of the reconciliation; and Madame de Maintenon, bored to death and harassed by draughts, received in the presence of the army and of the Court the honours due to a queen. But the memory of those anxious days was not soon forgotten, and when a few years afterwards her other favourite ecclesiastic, Cardinal de Noailles, whom she had made Archbishop of Paris, lost the king's favour on account of his dislike of the Jesuits and his suspected leanings towards Jansenism, she wrote 'It is my fate to be killed by the bishops.'

In 1703 the death of her brother, though it revived for a moment poignant recollections of early days, relieved her from a constant source of anxiety. For many years Charles d'Aubigné had been leading a worthless and dissipated life in Paris. His open gibes at the '*beau frère*' and at his sister's piety were wanting alike in taste and dignity; and his misconduct did not stop at words. In 1700, *à propos* of a child he had had by a certain Mme. de la Brosse, Madame de Maintenon had written to the Archbishop of Paris: 'Do what you can to secure the complete surrender of little Charlotte . . . it is the only way of saving her from the knowledge of her father and mother, with whom she will be trained to vice. . . . I will put her in a convent in the country. I will take charge of her as long as I am alive, and will commend her to my

niece when I die. . . . M. d'Aubigné has already made me similar presents. . . . All means are good provided we can save the poor little thing.' In his last years Charles had been persuaded to submit to a kind of semi-confinement at Saint-Sulpice, where, in a home for decayed noblemen, his movements had been dogged by a priest to whom was assigned the difficult task of keeping the old *roué* from wandering out of the straight path. But he frequently eluded the vigilance of his *custode*, and the hopes of reform proved illusory. However, he made an edifying end.

'I have wept for M. d'Aubigné,' wrote Madame de Maintenon. 'He was my brother, and he loved me. He was good at bottom, but his life was so ill-regulated that I can say he gave me little joy except in the manner of his death. . . . He spoke in the most edifying terms and the words came from his heart. You know that he was not an eloquent speaker.'

Very different was Madame de Maintenon's life at Versailles from the simple programme she had sketched for herself in the days when she had looked forward to a peaceful old age at Maintenon. The insipid chatter of the Court wearied her. 'I am writing,' she says to the Comte d'Ayen, husband of her niece, in 1701, 'in a brief interval of leisure. Mme. de Dangeau is coming to dine with me, and perhaps Mme. d'Heudicourt. Monsieur will be a spectator, and will want a reason for what we eat and what we refuse, and I shall grow impatient. The princesses, who haven't gone hunting, will come in with their 'gang' and wait in my room till the king comes home for dinner. The huntsmen will return in a body and tell us, all at once, the most trivial details of the hunt.' And again, 'the talk about peas goes on the same as ever. The longing to eat them, the pleasure of having eaten them, and the joy of hoping to be able to eat some more, are the

three topics that I have heard discussed for the last four days. Some ladies, after supping with the king, and supping well, have peas waiting for them at home when they return, and eat them before going to bed.'

Age and infirmity were beginning to tell on her. In 1706 she wrote: 'I have lost my health, and for four years I have had a chronic fever. It has weakened me to such an extent that I can hardly write with my own hand now, and have to employ a secretary.' It needed a robust health and an imperturbable temper to support the fatigues of the existence to which Madame de Maintenon was condemned. She once described her daily life to Mme. de Glapion at Saint-Cyr:—'People begin to come into my room at 7.30. First it is M. Maréchal, and, as soon as he has gone, M. Fagon enters. He is followed by M. Bloin, or somebody else, who is sent to inquire after my health. I sometimes have urgent letters to write, which I am obliged to put in then. Next come the people of importance, M. Chamillart one day, the Archbishop another; to-day it is a general who is starting to join his army, to-morrow an audience that I have to give. The other day the Duc du Maine was waiting in my ante-chamber till M. Chamillart had finished, and, as soon as the minister had gone, the duke came in and stayed till the king's arrival. When the king comes they all have to go, and he remains with me till Mass-time. Observe that all this time I am not yet dressed. If I were, I should not have had time to say my prayers. So I still have my *coiffure de nuit*; and yet my room is like a church; there is a regular procession through it, and an eternal coming and going.

'When the king has heard Mass he comes back to my room. Then the Duchess of Burgundy enters with a number of ladies, and stays till I dine. . . . At dinner I am surrounded by a circle of ladies so that I cannot even ask for something to drink; I tell them sometimes that

their presence is a great honour but that I would rather have a valet. At last they go off to their own dinners, for I have mine at twelve with Mme. d'Heudicourt and Mme. de Dangeau, who are invalids. So at last I am alone with them. But usually Monseigneur chooses this particular moment to call; one day because he isn't dining at all, or another because he has dined early in order to hunt. He is the most difficult man in the world to entertain because he doesn't say a word; however, I have to try, because he is my guest . . . but it is not very lively. By this time the others have finished dinner. The king, with all the princesses and the royal family, comes into my room, and they make it intolerably warm. We chat, and the king stays for about half an hour. Then he goes; but only he. All the others stay, and, as he is no longer there, they draw round me and I have to listen to the latest witticisms of the Maréchal C——, the *bon mot* of X——, and the story about Z——. After a while they go off to their own rooms; and do you know what happens then? One or other of them always stays behind to talk to me in private. She takes me by the hand and leads me into my *petite chambre* to tell me something disagreeable or dull; for, as you may imagine, it isn't *my* business that they want to talk about but the affairs of their own family. . . . When the king returns from the hunt he comes to my room. The door is closed and nobody else is allowed to enter. So I am alone with him, and have to listen to his worries, if he has any, his gloomy forebodings, and his *vapeurs*. He has no conversation. Then some minister comes. If they want my advice they call for me. If not, I withdraw to a little distance; and that is when I say my afternoon prayers. While the king is still working I have my supper; but not once in two months can I enjoy it at my leisure. I know that the king is alone, that I have left him sad, or else, when he

has nearly finished with M. Chamillart, he asks me to make haste . . . so that I am always in a hurry and have to eat quickly. I have my fruit put on with the meat to save time. I leave Mme. d'Heudicourt and Mme. de Dangeau at table, because they can't swallow their food as quickly as I do ; and I often suffer in consequence.

'After that, as you may imagine, it is late ; I have been up since six in the morning, and I haven't had time to breathe the whole day. I feel exhausted ; I have yawning fits, and begin to realise what age means. At last I get so tired that I can hold out no longer. The king perceives it, and says sometimes, "You are very tired, aren't you? You ought to go to bed." So I go to bed (behind a screen, in the same room) ; my maids undress me ; but I know that the king is waiting to say something ; or else that there is some minister present and that he is afraid of being overheard by the maids. So I make haste ; such haste that I am often out of breath ; and all my life I have hated being hurried. . . . At last I am in bed, and send away my maids. The king comes to my bedside and stays there. Although I am in bed, there are many things I want—the sheets warmed, for instance ; but I have nobody I can ask to do it for me. Not that I couldn't have a maid, for the king is kindness itself, and, if he thought I wanted one, he would allow me ten as soon as one ; but he doesn't realise that I am uncomfortable. As he is always his own master everywhere and does what he likes, he thinks that other people are like him ; and if I don't have a maid he supposes that I don't want one. He stays with me till he goes to supper, and about a quarter of an hour earlier the Dauphin and the Duke and Duchess of Burgundy come to say goodnight. At ten, or a quarter past, everybody leaves me, and I take the remedies I require ; but often the anxieties and fatigues of the day prevent me from sleeping.'

Nor was Marly much of a relief; for, though the official routine was relaxed, there were counterbalancing disadvantages. 'If I live much longer in the king's room,' she writes in April 1705, 'I shall become paralysed. There isn't a door or a window that shuts. One is buffeted by a wind which reminds me of the American hurricanes.' And from Fontainebleau there is the same complaint. 'Don't imagine that I can put screens in front of my big window. One can't arrange one's room as one would like to, when the king comes there every day. One has to die symmetrically.'

Anonymous letters, too, though we profess to disregard them, often leave a sting; and Madame de Maintenon received her full share. One would abuse her for allowing people to be killed and ruined all through the summer and forbidding amusements in the winter. Another, more venomously still, would ask whether she were not tired of sucking the blood of the poor; or what, considering her age, she hoped to do with the wealth she was piling up. One day a poor woman came to her weeping and asking for justice; 'I have been slandered,' she said, 'and I demand reparation.' 'Slander?' said Madame de Maintenon bitterly, 'why, we live on it at Court.'

However, life was not all black. Apart from the interest of Saint-Cyr, the society of a few chosen friends, such as Mme. de Dangeau, the kind, clever and charming lady against whom not even Saint-Simon has a word to say, or Mme. de Caylus, or witty Mme. d'Heudicourt, added a zest to life. But there was one tie which, more than all others, bound her to Versailles. The marriage of the Duke of Burgundy in 1696 had not only brought a fresh and charming personality to Court, but had provided Madame de Maintenon with an occupation of the kind that was most congenial to her, that, namely, of forming

the character of the future queen of France. To win the confidence and affection of the child of twelve was, to Madame de Maintenon, no difficult feat; but to attach the young wife to a husband whom she respected but did not love, and to develop in the warm-hearted but headstrong princess the qualities needed for her future position, was a task which taxed all the elder lady's resources. It is to her credit that she realised at once that the kind of training which was suited to the *demoiselles* of Saint-Cyr was not adapted for a future queen, that the impetuous little princess must not be held in too tightly, and that she would never realise the emptiness of a life of pleasure till she had had her fill of amusements. In spite of protests from high quarters, Madame de Maintenon determined that the Duchess of Burgundy should enjoy her youth, and should, within certain well-defined limits, 'sow her wild oats.' So far as circumstances permitted she even associated herself with the pleasures of the girl, sat through the balls at Marly, and endured the water parties on the canal[1]; and, through the association, learned also insensibly to modify her own views on pleasure; for we find her writing quite enthusiastically about some theatricals in which the duchess took part, and which were neither '*Esther*' nor '*Athalie*.' At all events, she thought, they were a much less harmful way of spending time than cards. But never for a moment did she relax the anxious watch which alone could save the careless feet of the light-hearted princess from the pitfalls which Court intrigue and family jealousies were constantly digging for her. She was rewarded by the whole-hearted devotion of her pupil, and her efforts seemed on

[1] Her actual words, *j'ai appris à ramer*, would seem to imply even more; but it is incredible that she actually wielded a laborious oar; such exercise would have been considered undignified for a great lady, apart from the fact that she was probably physically incapable of performing it.

the point of being crowned with brilliant success. The duchess, always loyal at heart, had been drawn closer to her husband by the calumnies of which he had, for a short while, been the object; and, on the death of Monseigneur in 1711, she had risen with unexpected dignity to her new duties as Dauphine. Everything seemed to promise a brilliant future, when the untimely death of husband and wife in 1712 plunged France into mourning.

Madame de Maintenon was prostrated by the blow; for some months she could not even bring herself to see the little Duc d'Anjou, so poignantly did the child's face recall the mother's. She still had links to bind her to the past; but the hopes which had reconciled her to the present and brightened the future had, within a few short weeks, turned to dust and ashes. 'I never wish to love anybody again,' she cried; and, 'I live more than ever at Saint-Cyr, to hide myself. When I am here [at Versailles] those who feel our loss most deeply gather round me, and we pass the day in tears.'

But the great, like the poor, cannot for long indulge their private sorrows. 'I have always found,' she wrote to Mme. des Ursins, 'that the Court, which I have never liked, is a good place for the afflicted. One is forced to forget oneself in order to think of others.' And so the poor lady, with an aching heart, and longing for the peace of Saint-Cyr, had to brace herself to endure the daily routine of Versailles and Marly, more meaningless and wearisome than ever now that the one really fascinating figure had been removed. If ever Madame de Maintenon had coveted power, she expiated her fault in the sad years that closed the reign. Old and toothless, with powers of sight and hearing both failing, she was left almost alone to cheer and amuse the melancholy king who clung to her from habit. We can imagine the dulness of the long tête-à-têtes in the room that was so full of memories, the sad

monotony of the evening concerts, and all the futile efforts to forget.

Release came at length on September 1, 1715, when Louis XIV after three weeks of illness breathed his last. On August 30 Madame de Maintenon had distributed amongst her followers her few belongings and withdrawn to Saint-Cyr, leaving the king in an unconscious state. Her conduct on this occasion has been much blamed, and her flight branded as desertion; it certainly seems to argue a lack of feeling. In her defence it may be urged that, as soon as the king had practically ceased to exist, her position at Versailles was certain to become ambiguous and difficult. Perhaps Jean Buvat is right when he says that, on the morning of the 30th, Louis bade her a last farewell and ordered her to retire at once to Saint-Cyr. The cruel words she is said to have used as she left the sick chamber have no historical foundation. Still, it is impossible not to regret that she showed such haste to be gone. If anything resembling love or even warm affection had ever entered into her feelings for the dying man, she would certainly have waited for the end; for, with all her faults, she was a woman. But it was duty to the king and not affection for the man which had chained her to Versailles; and, the duty ended and the task completed, she was glad to go.

From Saint-Cyr, ten days later, she wrote to Mme. des Ursins: 'I wish with all my heart, Madame, that your lot were as happy as mine. I have seen the king die like a saint and a hero. I have left the world which I did not like, and I am in the most charming retreat I could desire.'

The few remaining years of her life she spent in dignified retirement at Saint-Cyr, preparing for death. The Regent behaved like a gentleman, continued the modest pension she had received from the late king, and confirmed the royal grant to Saint-Cyr. Occasionally she saw a few of

her most intimate friends, the Maréchal de Villeroy, Mme. de Dangeau, Mme. de Caylus, and other members of her family: but she never again left the convent walls or attempted to influence state affairs. In the June of 1717 she was honoured by a visit from that clever savage, Peter the Great, and described the event to Mme. de Caylus with something of her old verve.

'The Czar arrived at seven and sat down by my bedside. He asked me, through his interpreter, if I was ill. I replied "Yes." He then asked me what my illness was. I replied, extreme age coupled with a feeble constitution. He did not know what else to say, and his interpreter didn't seem to understand me. His visit was very short . . . I forgot to tell you that he drew the curtains at the foot of my bed a little way apart to have a look at me: you may imagine if the sight pleased him!'

Though mainly occupied with preparations for the future world, it was impossible that her thoughts should not wander back at times to the past, and, on these rare occasions, she felt her isolation.

'Between ourselves,' she wrote to the Maréchal de Villeroy in 1717, 'I should be happier than I am if I had some society: but that is impossible here; and, however clever a nun may be, she knows nothing about the things which have interested us all our lives.'

The end came peacefully on April 15, 1719. Instead of the fabulous wealth with which she was credited, she left sixteen thousand francs in cash, twelve thousand francs' worth of plate, and a ring, the gift of the late king, worth ten or twelve thousand francs. No royal favourite had ever cost France so little

Her political influence is difficult to estimate. In the privacy of her apartment, where the king worked alone with her and his ministers, her advice was often asked and her opinions carried weight. She had approved of

the Spanish adventure, and had afterwards ardently longed for peace, almost at any price. But she did not hold the threads of policy in her hands, as her contemporaries supposed, and her influence over the king, as none knew better than herself, had its limits. 'To tell you the truth, Monseigneur,' she wrote to the Archbishop of Paris, at one time her most trusted and confidential friend, 'the king does not like to hear of business except through his ministers, and he is vexed with the Papal Nuncio for writing directly to me. Make him understand the position once and for all, I implore you. I can only give general advice on occasions, and have no control over particular events, which are seldom mentioned before me. I should be only too well rewarded for the slavery in which I live if I could sometimes do good; but, Monseigneur, I can only groan when I see what shape things are taking . . . Please tell the Nuncio that I dare not interfere in state business, that my opinions are what he does me the honour of believing them to be, but that I have to keep them to myself.'

To this it must be added that her interests were not political, and that, in consequence, when she endeavoured to promote individuals to great offices, she was apt to think more of their personal worth than of their fitness for the post. As a moral reformer, which was perhaps the *rôle* she coveted, she failed conspicuously. Over individuals indeed her influence was immense. She made Louis, if not a better king, at least a better man. The Duchess of Burgundy, who promised to be her brightest legacy to France, died before time had tested her work. But she did not enter as a regenerating force into the life of her generation. Her idea of religion was too narrow and austere to appeal to the quick wits and lively disposition of her countrymen. By a strange irony of fate she had helped to expel from France the very men who, though they detested her

theology, shared her views on life and conduct; and the courtiers at Versailles hated her conception of duty for the same reasons that had made them hate the Huguenots. All that she effected was to make religion appear synonymous with dulness, and to pave the way for the licentious paganism of the Regency.[1]

[1] In order to keep this sketch within reasonable limits I have been obliged to omit many interesting and important details. A great deal of the matter touched on is highly controversial, but want of space has prevented me from going into the points of the controversy. Many people derive their ideas of Madame de Maintenon from the highly coloured pages of Saint-Simon, who hated her as the protectress of the Duc du Maine and was unable to correct his prejudices by personal knowledge of the lady. But, in trying to prove her an all-powerful and malign influence, he sometimes proves too much. The fall of Chamillart, according to him, was the work of a long and patient intrigue conducted by the favourite to a triumphant issue. But an influence which for years was powerless against a minister whose conspicuous failure had made him generally unpopular, would not have been an influence that counted for much. As a matter of fact it was only Louis' personal affection for Chamillart that preserved him so long in office. In the end he had to be sacrificed to the popular demand. Madame de Maintenon speaks of his fall several times in her letters, and never with any trace of personal feeling or the least suggestion of triumph. Equally free from bitterness are her allusions to the Duc d'Orléans. At a time when Saint-Simon supposed her to be plotting his destruction she wrote to her favourite, the Duc de Noailles, 'The respect which I owe to the Duc d'Orléans prevents me from saying a word about his conduct' (a discreditable intrigue in Spain, whose object was to secure him the crown); 'I see with sorrow the harm he has done to himself in public opinion. From another point of view he is openly leading a scandalous life, and the king suffers in his affections and his conscience. Wherever one turns there is nothing but trouble.'

CHAPTER VIII

MONSIEUR

Childhood—Character—Has no political influence—Jealous of his rights—His married life—An egoist—His religion—Quarrel with the king—Death and funeral.

AMONGST the numerous *dramatis personæ* of Versailles there were two men who figured prominently at all state functions and in all public ceremonies. An outsider, judging by the prominent position they occupied on such occasions and the marked deference with which they were treated by the king, would naturally have assumed that they were two of the most influential personalities at Court. In reality, the part they played was that of royal 'supers.' They were, Monsieur the king's brother, and Monseigneur the king's son.

Of Monsieur, in his final and least attractive stage, Saint-Simon has left us one of his most vivid portraits:

'A small man with a projecting stomach, whose heels were so high that he seemed to be on stilts; as particular about his dress as a woman; covered with rings, bracelets, jewelry, bows, and ribbons; with a wig, full in front, black and powdered; reeking of all kinds of scents, and scrupulously clean in all his person; he was accused of putting on rouge imperceptibly; his nose was long, his mouth and eyes good, his face full but very long. All his portraits are like him.'

For this effeminate and over-dressed creature, who

combined the worst faults of a woman with the most degrading vices of a man, it would be difficult to feel anything but contempt, if contempt were not tinged with pity; for Monsieur was, to a great extent, the victim of his upbringing.

Philippe, Duc d'Anjou, who, on the death of his uncle Gaston, became Duc d'Orléans and took the title of Monsieur was born at St. Germain on September 21, 1640. In his early years he showed intelligence; but, if the king was not allowed to know much, it was not likely that the younger brother would be permitted to know more. 'The cardinal,' wrote Madame, his second wife, 'was afraid that Monsieur might be better educated than the king; and, with this strange fear in his mind, he ordered the tutor to teach him nothing at all. "What are you thinking of?" he said one day to M. de la Mothe [the tutor]. "It will never do to make the king's brother an able man. If he knew more than his Majesty he would no longer be capable of blind obedience."'

Accordingly, from the very first, Philippe was trained to occupy a subordinate position. The two boys were brought up together, played, quarrelled, and loved one another; but in all disputes the younger had to give way to the elder, and was made to feel, almost from his cradle, that his first duty was to efface himself before the superior claims of the future king. The ascendency which Louis thus acquired and retained through life was not due merely to the mother's preference for the elder son. Anne of Austria was impressed with the dangers of family dissensions; and the trouble which Gaston of Orléans, weak and vacillating as he was, had given to Louis XIII was a warning of what might happen in the future. She was determined, therefore, that Philippe should never be capable of heading an opposition; and, though she loved the child and was loved in return, she

had no scruples in sacrificing his mental development to her conception of monarchy. Being a stupid woman herself, she probably had no idea what such a sacrifice might entail.

Philippe's character seconded the political aims of his mother. He had none of the natural virility which enabled Louis XIV to survive the effeminising influences of his youth. As a child he was pretty rather than handsome, and pretty like a girl. In the society of the Court ladies, with whom he spent most of his time, and who petted and caressed the attractive and lively child, he learned to prattle, to play games, and to take a keen interest in dress; worst of all, he was encouraged to dress himself up as a girl. The youth who emerged from these surroundings had little to commend him. Nearly all the Bourbons, even the worst, were fond of hunting, physically hardy, and capable of enduring heat and cold, hunger and thirst. Philippe hated fatigue and seldom hunted, partly because he found the exercise exhausting and partly because he feared that exposure to the air would ruin his complexion. Unable any longer to dress like a girl in public, he would put on a mob-cap and earrings in the privacy of his bedroom, and contemplate himself in the looking-glass. The amusing prattle of the child had become the aimless chatter of a gossiping fop, and Philippe was notorious as one of the greatest busybodies in the Court, the promoter of petty squabbles, the purveyor of small scandal, vain, fickle, indiscreet, and incapable of keeping a secret. He still seized eagerly every opportunity that presented itself of displaying his charms in feminine attire. At theatricals he chose the *rôle* of heroine or *bonne*; and one evening, at the Palais Royal, he even went so far as to appear at a masked ball in his favourite costume. 'After opening the ball with Mlle. Brancas he withdrew, dressed himself up as a woman, and came back

masked, holding the arm of the Chevalier de Lorraine. He danced a minuet, and then took his place among the ladies. After a little pressing he removed his mask; he wanted nothing better than to be seen and admired.'

It is not surprising that the young men whose company he affected treated him with scant respect. 'At a ball at Lyons, in 1658, the Comte de Guiche, one of his favourites, amused himself by playfully kicking Monsieur from behind. Monsieur made no objection, but the queen-mother was angry, and de Guiche had to retire for a while from the Court.' [1]

Such a character, under ordinary circumstances, would have been allowed to sink into deserved obscurity. But Monsieur was the king's brother, and Louis' conception of monarchy required that anybody who was closely connected with the sovereign should share in the reflected lustre of the throne. It is only fair to add that Louis was fond of Philippe; but more from habit and association than from any tastes they shared in common. The king had a very clearly defined idea of the position which his brother was to occupy. He was to enjoy the shadow of favour without the substance. He was encouraged to have a high idea of his own importance. In the private apartments he enjoyed privileges that were not even accorded to the Dauphin; he always had an armchair, and did not wait for the king's permission to use it; and, after supper, in the king's cabinet, he alone shared with the sovereign the privilege of being seated. When *fêtes* had to be organised or theatricals rehearsed, Monsieur exercised a little brief authority; and his intimate acquaintance with Court pedigrees, intermarriages, and titles (the only form of knowledge which he possessed), led to his being consulted as an expert on questions of precedence and etiquette.

[1] *Education des Princes de la Maison des Bourbons de France*, by H. Druon.

His vain and superficial nature was easily contented with this fictitious importance, and nobody was more jealous of his prerogatives. When the cardinals took to wearing purple mourning, a colour hitherto reserved for royalty, it was Monsieur who called attention to the encroachment and thwarted their ambition; when the Princes of the Blood showed an inclination to refuse the service which they owed to the 'Sons of France,' it was Monsieur once more who brought them to heel. His method of doing so was more original than dignified. Amongst the most valued privileges of royalty was that of receiving its undergarments from the hands of the most distinguished person present at the toilet. This service the Princes of the Blood were trying to renounce, not by any open refusal, but by absenting themselves on all occasions when it could be required and allowing the reason of their absence to be known. Monsieur, wounded in his tenderest susceptibilities, complained to the king, who replied that the matter was not one of first-rate importance. At the same time he advised his brother, if he felt keenly on the subject, to take some opportunity of exacting the service.

At Marly, Monsieur was lodged on the ground-floor of the main building; and there, fortified by the king's approval, he waited like a spider for his prey. One morning, at last, the fly walked into the parlour. Monsieur had just risen from bed, and, clad in his dressing-gown, was looking out of window, when he spied M. le Duc (grandson of the great Condé) in the garden. Hastily throwing open the windows, he called to him; and M. le Duc, suspecting no treachery, came up. Monsieur asked him where he was going to, and, as he put the question, stepped back through the open window. The duke, in order to make his answer heard, was obliged to make a corresponding advance; and so by a succession of questions, accompanied by strategical retreats, Monsieur

drew the guileless duke into the ambush. Then, suddenly throwing off his dressing-gown and night-shirt, he signalled to the *premier valet de chambre* to put the day-shirt into the prince's hands. M. le Duc, completely trapped, did not dare to refuse. He took the proffered garment and passed it to Monsieur, who laughed and said, 'Good-bye, cousin; you can go now, I mustn't detain you any longer.' The duke, who felt all the malice of these words, went away in a rage, which was not soothed by the arrogant account Monsieur afterwards gave of the incident.

But of real power Monsieur had no share. His advice was never asked at important crises; and the ministers, who were wont to flatter anybody who possessed the smallest influence with the king, scarcely troubled themselves to be even civil. On the rare occasions when some spark of ambition was kindled within him and he clamoured for the substantial rewards of favour, he was easily put off with flattering words or some trivial gift. The one thing which was never grudged him was money, and at the Palais Royal and St. Cloud he held a showy though stormy Court. Young men without a future, and high-born ladies with a past, thronged his salons and crowded round his gaming tables; for cards were the one serious occupation of his life. St. Cloud was a delightful summer residence and its gardens were famed for their beauty; and, as it lay on the direct road from Paris to Versailles, people passing from one place to the other would often look in to pay their respects to the king's brother and taste his good cheer. As Monsieur did not like his palace to be regarded as a mere halting-place, they generally concealed the fact that they were on their way to or from the Court.

But, in spite of the futility of his actual life, Monsieur had once had in him the germs of better things. He had been genuinely attached to his mother and, during her long and fatal illness, had nursed her with the devotion of a

daughter, talked to her eloquently about the comforts of a religion which he did not practise, and mastered his physical shrinking from the atmosphere of a sick chamber which was unusually distressing.[1] Nor had he always been wholly without the physical courage which was characteristic of the Bourbons. Daniel de Cosnac had refused to enter his service as almoner till he had assured himself that Monsieur had in him the 'makings of a man.' At the siege of Mons, and during the campaign in Flanders, he had displayed a contempt for danger and an indifference to fatigue which had been all the more admired because they were unexpected. Unfortunately, his prowess excited the jealousy of the young king, who was prevented by reasons of state from exposing his own person too freely. The victory of Cassel ended Monsieur's military career. The cry of '*Vive le Roi et Monsieur qui a gagné la bataille*' was not the kind of homage that Louis appreciated, and the younger brother was never again invited to command an army. He relapsed into his effeminate ways; boasted of his military achievements; showed the ladies how battles were fought and won with the furniture of his rooms; but acquiesced, with fatal readiness, in a decision which deprived him of all chance of winning fresh laurels.

The married life of such a man was not likely to prove a success; but Monsieur made two experiments. His first wife was Henriette d'Angleterre, the clever and beautiful daughter of Charles I, whose early misfortunes had invested her with a halo of romance to which few people at the French Court, except her husband, were insensible. She bore him two daughters, one of whom became Queen of Spain; and her sudden death, in 1670, involved

[1] Anne of Austria died of cancer, and the medical knowledge of the day was quite incapable of dealing with the disease. When M. de Motteville tried to raise the queen in her bed, he fainted.

Monsieur in an odious suspicion which his conduct had done something to justify. Saint-Simon gives the story with his usual wealth of detail. Henriette, who enjoyed the royal favour in a marked degree, outraged in her susceptibilities as wife by the domination which the Chevalier de Lorraine exercised over her husband, had procured from the king the favourite's banishment. Monsieur, who had first fainted at the news and afterwards thrown himself at the king's feet with tears and entreaties, was unable to shake Louis' determination. After repeated scenes with his wife, whose part in the proceedings he suspected though she was careful to deny all complicity, he resigned himself to the inevitable. Not so the Chevalier de Lorraine. Wearying of his exile in Italy, and despairing of a return till death should have removed Henriette from the scene, he despatched a packet containing a sure and secret poison to two of his accomplices in the household, d'Effiat and Beuvron. In the June of 1670, Henriette, after her return from England, whither she had been sent to negotiate the secret treaty of Dover, had gone to St. Cloud to recover from the fatigues of the journey. She was in the habit, every evening, about seven o'clock, of drinking a glass of chicory water, which was placed for her in a faïence pot, in the antechamber which led to her apartments. Beside it was a jar of ordinary water with which to dilute the mixture in case it should be too strong. On June 29 d'Effiat was discovered at the cupboard of this ante-chamber by the servant in charge of the place. He had the jar of water in his hands, and, questioned as to what he was doing, he replied without the smallest embarrassment that, knowing of the existence of the water, he had taken the liberty of quenching an intolerable thirst.

The same evening, shortly after drinking her chicory, Henriette was taken seriously ill, and died at three on the following morning, after cruel sufferings. The king,

tormented by a horrible suspicion, determined to probe the affair to the bottom. At the dead of night he sent Brissac, with six trusty guards, to St. Cloud, to seize Purnon, the *premier maître d'hôtel*, who, from his intimacy with d'Effiat, was likely to be in the plot, if plot there were. Purnon was secured and brought by a back staircase into the king's bedroom. There, Louis, after dismissing all his attendants, addressed Purnon as follows: 'My friend, listen to me carefully. If you confess everything and answer truly the questions I am going to put to you, whatever your own guilt may be I will pardon you and never mention the matter again. But beware that you do not conceal the smallest detail; for, if you do, you will not leave the room alive. Was Madame poisoned?' 'Yes, sire,' replied Purnon. 'And who poisoned her?' continued the king, 'and how was it done?' Purnon replied that the Chevalier de Lorraine had sent the poison to Beuvron and d'Effiat, and described how the crime had been accomplished. Then the king, after repeating his threats and promises, asked: 'And did my brother know about it?' 'No, sire,' replied Purnon. 'Nobody was fool enough to tell him; he can't keep a secret, and he would have betrayed us.' On hearing this the king uttered a prolonged 'Ah!' like a man who is suddenly relieved from an intolerable oppression.

This story was told to Saint-Simon by a M. Joly de Fleury, who professed to have heard it from Purnon himself. It receives some confirmation from a letter of Madame (the second wife of Monsieur) written in 1719:

'The Chevalier de Lorraine was exiled, but Madame [Henriette] paid for it with her life. Her enemies would not take Monsieur into their secret. "He can conceal nothing from the king," they said. "If we confess to him that we intend to poison Madame, either he will prevent us or he will denounce us to the king and get us

all hanged." Those who accused Monsieur of poisoning his wife have done him a great wrong. He was incapable of it. In order to exculpate themselves . . . they made him believe that Madame was poisoned by the Dutch.'

It is really not certain that Henriette was poisoned at all, but her contemporaries had no doubts on the subject. The king felt it incumbent on him to inform the second wife that he had assured himself of his brother's innocence, and that otherwise he would not have permitted the marriage. But it is incredible that he would have permitted the Chevalier de Lorraine to return to Court and have invested him with the cordon of the St. Esprit, if he had seriously thought him guilty of the murder of Henriette d'Angleterre.

Henriette had hardly breathed her last when the Court was already speculating as to who would be her successor. The king was known to favour an alliance with his cousin Mlle. de Montpensier, the heroine of the Fronde, and Monsieur was willing enough to accept her as a bride; not because she was young or beautiful, for she was thirteen years older than himself, but because she was enormously rich. However, the Grande Mademoiselle, who had other and more romantic designs in view, refused to become a consenting party, and the choice had to be made elsewhere.

It fell upon Elizabeth Charlotte, Princess Palatine, great-granddaughter of our own James I. The new Madame, who was only nineteen when she came to France, possessed in a marked degree the faults and virtues of the German character. Jealous of her rights but loyal in the performance of her duties, warm-hearted and intolerant, intelligent and prejudiced, she would have made an admirable wife to a man whom she could have respected as well as loved. It says much for her natural goodness that she at once took her stepdaughters to her heart, treated

them as younger sisters rather than as stepchildren, and, when marriage took them into distant countries, never allowed a week to pass without writing them long letters. But for her husband, when the first illusions had worn off, it was impossible for her to retain any feeling stronger than one of contemptuous tolerance. No two people were more unlike or less fitted to live together; Monsieur, with his indolent habits, his love of dress and his affected speech, who rouged his cheeks, and whose favourite formula for taking leave was, '*je ne vous quitte que pour le bon Dieu*'; and Madame, with her passion for exercise, her active mind, and her complete indifference to personal appearance, who called a spade a spade, and never made the smallest effort to conceal her likes and dislikes. Indeed, their natural *rôles* seemed to be inverted, and La Tonnerre wittily observed that Monsieur was '*la plus sotte femme*' and Madame '*le plus sot homme du monde*.'

Of the children resulting from this ill-assorted marriage two survived, a son and a daughter. After the birth of the latter the parents lived practically apart, each following his or her peculiar bent and meeting occasionally to quarrel. Madame at times electrified the not too reputable Court, which gathered round the king's brother at the Palais Royal and St. Cloud, by the home truths to which she treated them in her frank, uncompromising manner; Monsieur retaliated, in characteristic fashion, by accusing his wife of flirting, or by banishing the only ladies for whom she cared. Into his private life we get many, and not always edifying, glimpses in the letters of Madame. 'Nothing,' she wrote in 1695, 'could be more dull than our evenings in Paris. Monsieur plays *lansquenet* at a big table, but I am not allowed to approach it, nor to show myself while the game lasts; for Monsieur has a superstition that I bring him bad luck when he sees me. Nevertheless, he insists on my remaining in the room.

I have all the old women who don't play on my hands, and it lasts from seven to ten and makes me yawn horribly.' In spite of these precautions Monsieur was not uniformly successful, for in the same year he lost two thousand pistoles in three days.

With the death of his mother his last impulse towards self-sacrifice had disappeared, and he became frankly and cynically selfish. He could still cry over *Jonatas*,[1] but his parental instincts were almost dead. 'Monsieur,' wrote his wife in 1696, 'says openly that, as he is growing old, he has no time to lose; that he will spare neither pains nor money to amuse himself to the end . . . that he loves himself better than me or his children; and therefore, as long as he lives he will only think of himself. And he acts up to his principles.'

With such sentiments it was not likely that Monsieur would welcome the ascetic views of life which Madame de Maintenon endeavoured to popularise at Court. *Fêtes* were his element; and his voice was raised in protest against the curtailment of public pleasures which the Archbishop imposed on a reluctant Paris on the occasion of the Jubilee in 1696. For Madame de Maintenon he hardly concealed his dislike; it was the one bond of union between himself and his wife. He would readily have pardoned an improper *liaison*, but it was beyond his power to forgive Louis for making him the brother-in-law of the widow Scarron.

For religion, as he understood it, Monsieur retained a superstitious respect; and, unlike his son, the future Regent, he tempered his aimless, dissipated life by a strict observance of the ceremonies of the Church. No one was more regular in attendance at Mass or more scrupulous in his observance of fasts. 'Monsieur Feuillet,' he once said to the canon of that name, 'I am very thirsty; would it

[1] A play by Duché.

be breaking my fast to drink the juice of an orange?' 'Eh, Monsieur,' replied the canon with admirable good sense, 'eat a whole ox if you like, but live like a Christian and pay your debts.'

Though careful of appearances, Monsieur did not pretend to be *dévot*. 'I told him,' wrote Madame to the Electress Sophia of Hanover, 'that you were curious to know whether he, too, had become *dévot*. He laughed heartily, and said, "Tell your aunt that I am fonder than ever of my diamonds, and that I am no more *dévot* than I was when I had the honour of seeing her." Nevertheless,' adds Madame, 'between ourselves, he is *dévot* all the same, because it amuses him. Everything connected with worship delights him because he loves ceremonies.'

In the closing years of his life he was subject to fits of depression. He had always had a genuine fear of the Devil, and nobody could have had better grounds for anticipating an eventual meeting. As the sands of life began to run out, he realised the advisability of making his peace with Heaven; but, unlike his brother, he lacked the strength of will to break the chain of habit. He did endeavour to cut himself off from some of the pleasures of the table; he also talked less, though still, as Saint-Simon drily observes, like three or four women; but, apart from haunting fears and attacks of gloomy remorse, there was no real reform.

The end came suddenly and dramatically after a quarrel with the king. In consenting to the marriage of his only son, M. de Chartres, with Louis' youngest illegitimate daughter, Monsieur had sacrificed his personal pride in the hope of securing solid material advantages. But these hopes were doomed to disappointment, as anybody who knew the king's character and policy might have foreseen. The son was no more allowed to win laurels on the battlefield than the father; and, when the governorship of

Brittany fell vacant, the coveted post was given, not to the Duc de Chartres, but to the Duc du Maine. Monsieur came less frequently to Court, and his interviews with Louis were often accompanied by heated words. The king reproached his brother with the dissolute and scandalous life of the son; Monsieur replied that nothing better could be expected from a young man who was purposely and selfishly cut off from all employment in which he might find a field for the exercise of his legitimate ambitions.

Relations were in this strained condition when, on Wednesday, June 5, 1701, Monsieur came from St. Cloud to dine with the king at Marly. As soon as the council-meeting was over, he entered the king's *cabinet*, as was his wont. He found Louis much annoyed at the humiliating position in which the Duc de Chartres had placed his wife by his open *liaison* with one of her maids of honour, Mlle. Séry, and reproached Monsieur with the behaviour of his son. Monsieur replied angrily that the past lives of certain parents hardly gave them a claim to be severe on the rising generation, and reminded his brother pointedly how his own mistresses had shared the carriage of the late queen. The king replied in kind, and the two men began to tell each other home truths in a loud voice.

'At Marly, the door of the king's *cabinet* was always open, and privacy was only secured by means of a drawn curtain; consequently the heated altercation was plainly audible to the courtiers who had assembled in the royal bedroom to pay their respects to the king on his way to dinner. Under the circumstances, the usher who had charge of the door ventured to enter the *cabinet* and inform the king that his voice, and that of Monsieur, could be heard outside. This timely reminder led to a cessation of the shouting; but the quarrel was continued in an undertone. Monsieur said bitterly that, at the time of his

son's marriage, he had received all sorts of fine promises, but that he now realised that he was to have nothing but the shame and dishonour without any compensating advantages. The king, more and more enraged, replied that the war would oblige him to study economy, and that he intended to begin by cutting down the pensions which Monsieur enjoyed.

'At this point the conversation was interrupted by the announcement that dinner was ready, and a moment afterwards the brothers came out and sat down to table. Monsieur was fiery red, and his eyes still sparkled with rage. Some of the courtiers, by way of saying something, remarked that Monsieur looked as though he would be the better for being bled; a piece of advice which had been repeatedly offered at St. Cloud, and which Monsieur himself had approved. But Tancrède, his surgeon, was old, and performed the operation badly; and Monsieur, in order not to hurt the old man's feelings, had refused to submit himself to other hands. At the mention of bleeding, the king joined in, and said that he didn't know what prevented him from taking his brother to his room and having him bled that very hour.

'Monsieur ate prodigiously, as he was wont to do at all meals; not to speak of the large bowls of chocolate which he drank in the morning, and the mass of fruit, pastry, and sweets, which he consumed at all hours, and of which he always had his pockets full. After dinner he took Mme. de Chartres to St. Germain to visit the exiled King and Queen of England, and thence returned to St. Cloud at 6 P.M.'

'He was in a very good temper,' says Madame, 'and told us how many duchesses he had seen with the Queen of England. At nine they summoned us to supper, but I refused to go, as I had been feverish for four hours and was not hungry. Monsieur said to me, "*I* am going to

supper and shall not follow your example, for I am very hungry." '

In the middle of supper, as he was helping Mme. de Bouillon to a liqueur, it was noticed that he stammered and pointed at something with his hand. He was in the habit, occasionally, of speaking Spanish, and some of the ladies present, thinking that he was addressing them in that language, asked him to repeat the words; but the next moment he had fallen heavily against his son, who was seated beside him, in an apoplectic fit.

'Half an hour after he had left me,' says Madame, 'I heard a great commotion, and Mme. de Ventadour, pale as death, rushed into my room. "Monsieur is ill," she said. I went at once to his room, whither they had carried him. He knew me, but could not speak intelligibly. I could only catch these words, "You are ill; go to your room." He was bled three times and given eleven ounces of emetic, Schaffhausen water, and two bottles of English drops; but nothing was of any use. About 6 A.M. they saw that the end was near and dragged me out of the room.'

News of the seizure was brought to Marly while the king was still in his *cabinet* with Monseigneur and the princesses; but it was accompanied with the hopeful tidings that the patient had been bled and was better. Louis was accustomed to hasten to his brother's side on the most trivial alarms. Probably on this occasion he suspected that Monsieur's illness was a mere feint intended to force a reconciliation. At all events, he contented himself with sending the Marquis de Gesvres to St. Cloud to make inquiries; and, after giving orders that his own carriage should be held in readiness to start at a moment's notice, he went to bed shortly before midnight. A few minutes afterwards a page arrived with the news that Monsieur was better and a request that the Prince de

Conti would spare some Schaffhausen water, which was a favourite remedy for apoplexy. At 1.30 A.M., Longeville, who had been despatched by M. de Chartres, rode into Marly with the tidings that the emetic had produced no effect and that Monsieur's condition was critical. The king at once rose from his bed and started for St. Cloud, followed by Monseigneur and all the courtiers who could find a place in the carriages. He reached the palace at three in the morning to find his brother unconscious and Père de Trévoux, who had been summoned to administer the sacraments, crying despairingly, '*Monsieur, ne connaissez-vous pas votre confesseur? Ne connaissez-vous pas le bon petit Père de Trévoux qui vous parle?*'—a piece of incongruous sentiment which made the least afflicted laugh indecently.

The king was deeply moved and wept freely. The death of the brother whom he had loved in spite of their frequent bickerings snapped a link with the past, and the circumstances of their last meeting could not fail to intensify his natural grief.

At half-past eight he heard Mass in the chapel, and shortly afterwards, as there was no hope of a rally or even of a return to consciousness, he yielded to the entreaties of Madame de Maintenon and returned to Marly, after first saying a few words of condolence to Madame and her son.

Three hours later Fagon, who had been left by the bedside of the dying man, arrived to say that all was over. On receipt of the news the king had a fresh access of tears; and he continued to weep during dinner, which, in spite of Madame de Maintenon's suggestion that he should eat something in the privacy of her room, he insisted on taking in the ordinary way with the ladies.

'After such unmistakable signs of grief it was expected that the three remaining days at Marly would be extremely gloomy. However, on the day following the

death, after dinner (that is to say, at about 2.30 P.M.) the Duke of Burgundy went up to the Duc de Montfort and asked him whether he would like to play at *brelan*. "At *brelan!*" cried de Montfort in amazement; "you must have forgotten! Why, Monsieur is hardly cold yet!" "Pardon me," replied the prince, "I have not forgotten; but the king does not wish people to be dull at Marly, and has ordered me to set them down to cards; and fearing that others might be afraid to begin he has told me to set an example."[1]

This action was regarded by Saint-Simon and his contemporaries as a proof of the king's heartlessness. In reality, it was strictly in keeping with Louis' idea that, as sovereign, he had duties to perform to which he must sacrifice his private griefs and affections. Perhaps the sacrifice came more easily to him than to most people; perhaps too, as a man, he lost by making it. Selfish natures are hardened rather than fortified by the forcible repression of natural emotions; and selfishness was Louis' besetting sin. But there is no reason to doubt that in refusing to allow his personal grief to become a burden to his guests he was actuated by a sense of duty, or at least by a conception of his position which was not ignoble.

Monsieur's funeral was full of the pageantry which he had loved so much in life. His heart was taken to the Val de Grâce by M. le Duc; his body was conveyed to St. Denis with splendid pomp and ceremony. While the Bishop of Langres was sounding his praises in an eloquent funeral oration, Madame was turning out his cupboards at Versailles and destroying the compromising letters of his unworthy favourites.

[1] Saint-Simon.

CHAPTER IX

MADAME

Her portrait—Childhood—Marriage—Relations with the king—Her children—Marriage of the Duc de Chartres—Marriage of her daughter—Life at St. Cloud—Her tastes—Her religion—Dogs—Death of Monsieur—Scene with Mme. de Maintenon—Dislikes the Duchesse de Bourgogne—The Duchesse de Berry—A scene—Ill in 1712-1714—A fright—Death of the king—Last words.

'You must have completely forgotten what I am like if you do not class me amongst "the ugly." I have always been ugly, and small-pox has made me still more so. My waist is huge, and I am as square as a die. My skin is of a reddish colour tinged with yellow, and I am beginning to grow grey. My hair is pepper-and-salt coloured; I have wrinkles on my forehead and round my eyes; my nose is crooked, as of old, and pitted into the bargain by small-pox, as are my cheeks, which are pendulous. I have large jaws and bad teeth. My mouth, too, has changed somewhat, for it has grown bigger and has wrinkles at the corners. . . . There's a handsome face for you, my dear Amélise.'

Such is the unflattering picture which the ever-candid duchess drew of herself, at the age of forty-six, for the benefit of her half-sister.

A portrait, by Rigaud, which hangs in the rooms that were once tenanted by Madame de Maintenon at Versailles, leaves us with a much more agreeable impression. Hand-

some, Madame certainly was not; but we see her there, a jolly, round old lady, with frank humorous eyes, and character stamped on all her features—a fine and robust specimen of the German great lady.

Saint-Simon, who, as a judge of character, was often extremely penetrating, has supplied a word-picture which might well stand under the portrait:

'Madame was a princess of the heroic age; devoted to honour, virtue, the privileges of rank and dignity, and inexorable on the subject of etiquette. She was not without intelligence, and what she saw she saw clearly. A kind and loyal friend, reliable, frank, and upright, easily prejudiced and slow to alter an opinion once formed; coarse, with a dangerous habit of abusing people publicly; very German in all her ways; outspoken, and incapable of mincing matters either about herself or others; abstemious, and with whims of her own. She was fond of dogs and horses, passionately fond of hunting and the theatre. She always appeared in full Court dress or a riding-habit, and, at the age of sixty, well or ill (and she was seldom ill) she had never worn a dressing-gown. She was passionately attached to Monsieur her son, and almost madly so to the Duc de Lorraine[1] (her son-in-law) and his children because of their German blood; she was strangely fond of her nation and her relations, many of whom she had never seen.'

Elisabeth Charlotte was born at Heidelberg in 1652. Her father was Charles Louis, the Elector Palatine (son of the ill-starred Frederick V, once King of Bohemia), a bad ruler but a man of some culture and character, who hated priests and practised tolerance. Her mother was the Landgräfin Charlotte of Hesse-Cassel. Dissensions between the parents led eventually to their separation, and

[1] Saint-Simon was mistaken: Madame, as her letters show, was very far from being devoted to her son-in-law.

in 1659 Charles Louis was married, morganatically, to the Baroness Louise von Degenfeld, by whom he had several children. It was thought wise that Elisabeth Charlotte should be brought up away from home, and she was entrusted to the care of her aunt, the Electress Sophia of Hanover, with whom she stayed for four years and for whom she conceived a lifelong affection. In 1663 she was brought back to Heidelberg, and lived with her father till 1671, the year of her marriage. The glimpses we get of the little princess in her early years all tend to show that the child was mother of the woman; she was a headstrong, unconventional child, with a good heart and a passion for freedom and the open air. For her nurses and governesses she was rather a handful. 'Fräulein von Quaadt,' she relates, 'was our first governess, and she was very old. One day she wanted to whip me, for as a child I was rather turbulent. When she tried to pick me up I struggled so violently and kicked her poor old shins so hard that she fell in a heap with me. . . . That was why she insisted on going.'

For the scenes of her childhood, and for Heidelberg in particular, Madame always retained the warmest affection. 'How often,' she wrote long afterwards, amidst the splendours of the French Court, 'how often I have eaten cherries on the hill at five in the morning with a slice of bread. I was much happier then than I am now.' And again, 'I deem you happy to be able to tread once more the promised land—to wit, Heidelberg and Schwetzingen: greet in my name my old room and the *salon vitré*, and tell me all about them. I am sorry they have done away with the garden; all the more because, in the quick-set hedge that lined the moat, there used to be countless nightingales, and in spring they used to sing all night. And what have they done with the little stream that flowed through the garden? Many a time

have I sat and read on its banks on a fallen willow. The peasants of Schwetzingen and Offtersheim used to stand round and chat with me; it was more amusing than a circle of duchesses.'

This love of wild Nature remained a permanent feature of the princess's tastes. 'I prefer the country and the trees,' she wrote in later life, 'to the most splendid palaces . . . and a green meadow stretching along a stream to the most splendid gilt cascades; in a word, what is natural pleases me more than all that art or magnificence can produce or invent.'

But from Heidelberg, with its cherries and nightingales, its homely German ways and intellectual interests, Elisabeth Charlotte was hurried away to the formal magnificence of the French Court, in 1671, when she was nineteen years of age.

By marrying his daughter to Monsieur, the Duc d'Orléans, only brother of the French king, the Elector Charles imagined that he had made a clever political move. The character of the prospective bridegroom was a matter of secondary importance for everybody except the unfortunate bride; for it was the fate of royal princesses, then and since, to be pawns in the great game of European diplomacy. To the young bride the parting from her home and friends was bitter in the extreme. 'I cried till my side swelled. I did nothing but cry from Strasburg to Châlons, and during the whole night. I couldn't console myself for the way in which I had taken leave of my friends at Strasburg. I had shown myself much more indifferent than I really was.' However, there were amusements at the French Court to which a young and lively girl could hardly be indifferent. The tears were dried, and, after a year of married life, she was able to write in the best of spirits to her aunt: 'I have only one thing to tell you, namely that Monsieur is the best man

in the world; so we get on splendidly, None of his portraits are like him.'

But this illusion as to the moral excellence of her husband could not last long in the light of everyday experience. Indeed, Monsieur, with his scents and his foppery, his petty jealousies and effeminate vices, was the last kind of man to hold the affections of so essentially virile a nature as that of the Princess Palatine. An inborn Teutonic respect for the official position of her husband kept Madame's resentment within bounds; but, in her letters to the Electress Sophia, the bitterness of the wronged wife would sometimes overflow. 'Monsieur thinks of nothing but his favourites. He spends whole nights in orgies with them and gives them enormous sums of money. When I want sheets or anything I have to beg for them for ages, at the very moment when he is giving La Carte 10,000 crowns with which to buy his linen in Flanders; and because he knows that I know where the money goes to, he is suspicious of me and afraid that I shall tell the king, who might well banish his favourites.' In 1682 relations had become so strained[1] that Madame threatened to leave the Court; and the king had to intervene in order to effect a formal reconciliation.

The support and protection of the king, which Madame enjoyed for many years and never wholly lost, did much to compensate her for the neglect of her husband. Louis was a man of moods and prejudices and an eager devourer of flattery, but deep down in his nature there was a better self which seldom refused its tribute of respect to a downright honest character. And it must be admitted that, unconsciously, Madame offered him the subtlest flattery of all, by treating him with a reverence and submissiveness which she showed to no one else. But, in spite of

[1] Monsieur had accused his wife, ridiculously, of a *liaison* with one of the Chevaliers of the Royal Bodyguard.

this mutual goodwill, there were frequent sources of friction. For one thing, Madame's outspokenness was sometimes more than embarrassing. 'They are getting so particular here,' she wrote in 1685, 'that the other day the king sent his confessor to mine and has given me a terrible scolding on three points—first, that I had spoken coarsely about the Dauphin; secondly, that I had allowed some of my maids of honour to have *galants*; and, thirdly, that I had joked with the Princesse de Conti on the subject of *galants*. These three things, I am told, have so displeased the king that, if he had not taken into consideration the fact that I am his sister-in-law, he would have banished me from the Court.'

Annoying too, for a person of the king's fastidiousness, must have been Madame's carelessness in the matter of dress; for, though 'inexorable on the subject of etiquette,' she was careless about her personal appearance. She had no respect for fashions, and ninety-nine times out of a hundred her 'hair was all wrong'—a misfortune which she ascribed complacently to heredity. 'It's so cold here,' she wrote from Versailles in the February of 1695, 'that one hardly knows what to do. Yesterday, at High Mass, I thought my feet would be frozen; for when one is with the king one isn't allowed to have a foot-muff. I had a comic dialogue with his Majesty. He was scolding me for having put on a scarf; "Nobody," he said, "has ever come to the procession in a scarf." "That may be," I replied, "but then it has never been so cold as it is now." "Formerly," said the king, "you never used to wear one." "Formerly," I replied, "I was younger, and didn't feel the cold so much." "There were older people than you present," said the king, "and *they* didn't wear scarves." "The fact is," I replied, "that those old ladies would rather freeze than wear anything unbecoming, while *I* would rather be badly dressed than catch a cold

in my chest ; for I don't pride myself on my elegance." To which he said nothing.'

Another habit of Madame's was also trying to his Majesty : she could not keep awake in church. 'It's a great honour,' she writes plaintively, 'to be seated by the side of the king at sermons ; but I would willingly give up my place, for his Majesty won't let me sleep. As soon as I go off, he pokes me with his elbow and wakes me.' If we sympathise with the sleeper, we cannot refuse our meed of pity to the king ; for it seems, on Madame's own confession, that, as years stole upon her, sleep with her was always accompanied by loud snoring, which became so noisy and disturbing in course of time that she gave up going to sermons altogether.

But a much more serious cause of difference was the intense grief with which Madame heard of the sack of the Palatinate. Discretion was not one of her virtues, and when she felt strongly she spoke strongly. 'Though it were to cost me my life,' she wrote in 1689, 'I shall never cease to regret and deplore that I am, in a sense, the cause of the ruin of my country. I am seized with such horror at the thought of all that has been destroyed that every night, as soon as I begin to go to sleep, I fancy I am at Heidelberg or Mannheim, and seem to see all the desolation. Then I wake up with a start, and for two hours I can't go to sleep again. I picture to myself what it was like in my time and what a state it is in now, and then I can't help crying.'

The death of her father added to her bitterness. 'I must confess that you have guessed my thoughts,' she wrote, 'when you say that what afflicts me so much is the fear that papa died of grief, and that if the "great man" and his ministers hadn't caused him such torments we should have kept him longer.'

Now all letters, even those of the highest persons in

the land, were regularly opened, and extracts from them submitted to the king. Madame was perfectly well aware of the fact; but nothing could restrain her fluent pen, and her comments were all the more galling because the king's conscience was not quite easy about the Palatinate.

But there were other indiscretions beside which her expressions of grief for her country were harmless. Madame was a good hater, and the special object of her aversion was no less a person than Madame de Maintenon, whose birth and humble beginnings were alone enough to rouse all Madame's princely Teutonic prejudices; and there was, further, something in the lady herself which excited one of those inexplicable personal antipathies of which we are all conscious at times and which baffle analysis. Madame cannot mention the hated name without losing her sense of decorum and even of decency. 'Where the devil can't penetrate he sends an old woman.' 'I've told you of the death of M. Louvois; personally I would rather that a certain *vieille ordure* had died, for now she will be more powerful than ever.' 'The king's old slops has long had this frightful power. She's not so mad as to have herself proclaimed queen, as she knows the character of "her man" too well.'

These and similar expressions were duly reported to the king and the 'old slops'; and, to make matters worse, Madame confided her sorrows and her hate to the ears of the sympathetic Dauphine, who was also on bad terms with Madame de Maintenon. But the sympathetic Dauphine, unfortunately, made her peace with the powerful lady, and, as a pledge of friendship, repeated all Madame's confidences, as Madame herself was destined to discover on a subsequent occasion.

As a consequence of these indiscretions the king's manner changed. There was no open breach, but it was made evident in a hundred little ways that Madame was

no longer a favourite; she was not admitted with the other princesses to the privacy of the royal *cabinet*, and if she wanted to talk to the king she had to beg for a private audience. However, her position at Court was not the only anxiety that troubled the poor lady's mind. She had two children, a son and a daughter, to educate and settle in life; and the son, at least, was not all that a mother could have wished. Madame held stern and extremely orthodox views on education: to spare the rod, for her, was to spoil the child. 'I never in my life struck my son,' she says, 'but I often gave him the rod, as one ought to do. He still remembers it. Blows are dangerous and may damage the head.' Saint-Simon hints that the daughter suffered from the same stern discipline, and Madame's pages certainly did. 'When my pages behave badly I send them for a few months to Saint-Lazare; the young people are very wise and docile when they come out. When the eldest of the von Wendts was my page I sent him too for a change of air to the same place, and it did him a world of good. They are whipped there twice a day, and oftener if they are fractious.' But, though a martinet, Madame was no tyrant; she had rigid principles, but a soft heart for the young, as the following extract shows: 'I have here my grandson, twelve pages, and ten other little gentlemen, singing, jumping, and laughing, and making such a noise that I can't hear myself speak and I scarcely know what I am writing. I am sure they can be heard a quarter of a mile off.'

Unfortunately, the son, who was afterwards to become Regent, inherited few of his mother's sterling qualities, and, under the fatal influence of his father, developed a taste for debauchery that was regarded as eccentric even in an age when the standard of morals was not high. Madame was not blind to his faults. 'My son,' she said, 'is like the child in the story, to whose christening the

fairies were invited. One wished him a handsome figure; another, eloquence; a third, that he should learn all the arts; a fourth, that he should possess all physical accomplishments, such as fencing, riding, and dancing; a fifth, that he should become skilled in war; a sixth, that he should be braver than any other. But the seventh fairy had been forgotten! "I cannot take away from the child," she said, "what my sisters have given, but I will thwart him all his life long so that all their gifts will be of no use to him. Thus, I will give him such an ungainly walk that people will think him bow-legged or hump-backed; I will give him such a growth of black hair on his chin, from day to day, and will cause him to make such faces (like a man in a dream) that his good looks will be spoiled; I will disgust him with physical exercise, and plunge him into such a state of *ennui* that he will learn to hate all the arts he cultivates, music, painting, and drawing; and I will inspire him with a taste for solitude and a horror of the society of all good people." But, in spite of his faults, Madame loved her son, and to see him honourably married was the dearest wish of her heart. That wish was destined to be cruelly disappointed.

The king[1] had always been keenly interested in the aggrandisement of his natural children. Of his three daughters, one had been married to the Prince de Conti and another to M. le Duc, both Princes of the Blood. The third and youngest, Mlle. de Blois, he intended for no less a person than M. de Chartres. But there were difficulties in the way. For the public disapproval with which the match was sure to be hailed the king cared little, but the certain opposition of both Monsieur and Madame was a more serious obstacle. Monsieur was exceedingly sensitive on all points concerning his personal dignity, and Madame's views on bastardy and *mésalliances*

[1] This account of the engagement is a paraphrase of Saint-Simon.

were too well known to permit of any doubt as to how she would take the proposal. The first step was to gain over the father and son, and the agent employed was the Chevalier de Lorraine. This man had, from early times, acquired a complete ascendency over Monsieur, and, by a promise of the Order of the Saint Esprit, he was now bribed to make the marriage palatable. Monsieur was soon won over; and, in order to make sure of the young prince, Dubois, a creature of the Lorraines, was introduced into his intimacy and had soon gained a fatal and permanent hold over him. As soon as the king heard from Dubois that the ground was prepared, he determined to hasten matters. But one or two days before the execution of the design Madame got wind of it. She spoke to her son forcibly of the indignity of such a match, and drew from him a promise that he would never give his consent. However, one afternoon M. de Chartres was summoned, alone, to the king's *cabinet*, whither he found that Monsieur had preceded him. The king, speaking with the almost terrifying majesty which he knew how to assume, told his nephew that he was anxious to see him settled; that the war, which had been kindled on all sides, forbade the thought of those foreign princesses who would otherwise have been suitable; that none of the Princesses of the Blood was of a proper age; and that, finally, he could not better mark his affection than by offering him his own daughter; but that, however much he desired the match personally, he did not wish to force it upon his nephew, to whom he left complete freedom of choice. The prince, who was naturally timid and, like all the members of the royal family, much in awe of the king, was at his wit's end for a reply, but thought to get out of the difficulty by throwing the onus of a decision on Monsieur and Madame. So he stammered out that the king was master, but that his own wishes depended on those of his parents.

'That is right,' said the king; 'but, provided that *you* consent, your father and mother will offer no opposition. Is it not so, my brother?' he added, turning to Monsieur, who had already signified his acquiescence in private. Monsieur expressed his approval, and thereupon the king remarked that the only thing still wanting was the consent of Madame; and sent for her on the spot. While she was being fetched the king chatted with his brother, and both pretended not to notice the confusion and dejection of M. de Chartres.

Madame came, and the king at once said to her that he hoped she would not oppose a project so dear to his own heart and one which her husband desired to see accomplished and to which her son had given his consent. 'When your Majesty and Monsieur,' replied Madame, 'speak to me as masters, as you are doing now, I have no choice but to obey.' Thereupon, after making a short curtsy, she withdrew to her own room, whither she was immediately followed by her son, who was anxious to explain how everything had happened. But Madame refused to listen, heaped reproaches on him, and drove him from her room with a torrent of tears.

That evening there was *appartement*. Scarcely had the music ceased when the king, who, as usual, was in his private *cabinet*, sent for Monseigneur and Monsieur, who were just beginning a game of *lansquenet*; for Madame, who was watching with listless eyes a game of *hombre* that was going on near her; for M. de Chartres, who was playing moodily at chess; and for Mlle. de Blois, who had only just 'come out,' and who, although she was elaborately dressed that evening, had no suspicion of what was in store for her. She was naturally timid and very much afraid of the king, and imagined that she had been sent for to receive a reprimand. She came in trembling with apprehension, so much so that Madame

de Maintenon took her on to her lap and held her there during the whole of the interview. It only lasted a short time; the several characters then withdrew, and the news was made public. Monseigneur and Monsieur resumed their *lansquenet*; Monseigneur looked like his usual self, but nothing could be more shamefaced and disconcerted than the whole demeanour of Monsieur. M. de Chartres appeared dejected, and his future bride extremely embarrassed and unhappy.

Meanwhile, Madame was walking in the Galerie des Glaces with Mme. de Châteauthiers, her favourite and worthy of being so. She paced up and down with long strides, holding a handkerchief in her hand, weeping without restraint, talking in a loud voice, and gesticulating freely—the very image of Ceres after the abduction of Proserpine. People, as they passed through on their way to the state apartments, respectfully left her a clear field.

At the royal supper the king displayed his customary composure. Madame, who was seated next to her son, refused to look either at him or at her husband. Her eyes were full of tears, which every now and again overflowed on to the table. M. de Chartres, too, had red eyes, and both he and his mother hardly touched the food. The king kept offering Madame all the dishes that were in front of him. She refused them all brusquely, without, however, succeeding in breaking down the air of courtly attention which he had adopted towards her. At the close of the brief gathering, which followed the supper, in the king's private room he made her a marked and very low bow. Madame replied with a short pirouette, and timed her movements so nicely that when the king recovered he found himself confronted by her back, and she was already on her way to the door.

Madame spent the night in tears. On the following day the Court waited as usual in the Galerie des Glaces

for the end of the council meeting, after which the king used to hear Mass in the chapel. Madame was there. Her son approached her, as he did every day, to kiss her hand; and in a moment the impulsive lady had boxed his ears so soundly that the blow was heard for a considerable distance off. This incident covered the poor prince with confusion and filled the numerous spectators with prodigious astonishment.

The marriage was celebrated with great pomp on the Monday before Ash Wednesday, 1692. Cardinal de Bouillon said Mass and blessed the bridal bed. The exiled King of England, James II, handed the nightshirt to the bridegroom, and Mary of Modena did the same honour to the bride, who at the state ball on the following evening was led out to dance by the Duc de Bourgogne.

To Madame the festivities were gall and wormwood, but she had to endure them. In the course of long years she became partially reconciled to her daughter-in-law, whom she had at first described as 'a disagreeable person, who gets as drunk as a currier three or four times a week'; but she never forgave the marriage. Twenty-five years later she could still write, 'My son's marriage has spoiled my whole life and destroyed my jovial temperament.'

With her daughter, Madame was not quite so unsuccessful; and though the Duke of Lorraine was not reckoned among the first flight of European princes, he was better than the Comte de Toulouse, whom Madame had dreaded to have forced upon her as a son-in-law. Of all possible aspirants she would undoubtedly have preferred William III, who had become a widower, and for whom she had always maintained a kind of hero-worship. But politics and religion forbade the match. At one time she had even hoped for the Duc de Bourgogne; but, finally, the choice was limited to the King of the Romans and the Duc de Lorraine. 'The news is only too true,' she wrote.

'I fear my daughter will marry the Duc de Lorraine. I should have preferred the King of the Romans, for the duke is too much under the thumb of the king. But, anyhow, she won't die an old maid or marry one of the bastards.'

The marriage took place in 1698. Included in the trousseau was 20,000 crowns' worth of linen and lace, filling four enormous chests; besides a toilet-set, worth 40,000 crowns, a present from the king.

'Everybody cried at the wedding,' wrote Madame, with pardonable exaggeration; 'the King, the King and Queen of England, all the princesses, all the ecclesiastics, and all the courtiers; even the Guards and the Suisses; only the Dauphin didn't shed a tear, but treated the ceremony as a spectacle. The Duchesse de Bourgogne showed at last that she has a good heart, for she was so upset that she couldn't eat.'

Although the king retained for Madame, at the bottom of his heart, a feeling of respect that was not far removed from affection, her letters and her behaviour kept her in continual disgrace. In 1698 she wrote: 'In this great Court I have become almost a hermit; so I pass whole days alone in my study reading and writing. If somebody comes to pay me a visit, I see him for a moment, speak to him of the weather or the news of the day, and then return to my solitude. Four times a week I have my correspondence-day. On Monday I write to Savoy[1]; on Wednesday, to Modena[2]; on Thursday and Sunday, long letters to my aunt of Hanover. From six to eight I drive with Monsieur and our ladies. Three days a week I go to Paris, and I write daily to my friends there.' Saint-Cloud was her favourite residence, the Palais Royal her aversion. '*Paris pue*,' she says roundly; and she never became reconciled to the capital, though she was popular among the Parisians.

[1] To a step-daughter. [2] To a cousin.

Saint-Simon gives an amusing picture of her life at Saint-Cloud at about the same time.

'Madame dined and supped with the Court ladies of Monsieur, occasionally drove with some of them, often sulked in company, made herself feared by her harsh and savage temper and sometimes by her sallies, and passed the whole day in her study (she had expressly chosen a room in which the windows were more than ten feet from the ground) contemplating the portraits of the Princes Palatine and other German princes, with which the walls were covered, and writing every day with her own hand volumes of letters of which she herself made copies for reference. Monsieur had not been able to tame her to a more civilised life. He let her do as she liked, and lived on good terms with her without troubling himself about her person; and he had hardly any private intercourse with her.'

Madame had never cared for the French as a nation. She thought them vain and frivolous, and missed the serious and intellectual conversation to which she had been accustomed in her own home. The ambition of French women to figure in politics provoked her censure, and their ignorance moved her to scorn. 'Very few ladies,' she says, 'can write French correctly; French women themselves make every conceivable mistake, and I often have to correct my daughter's spelling: for *I*,' she adds proudly, 'write French very well.' The following specimen, out of many, of Madame's orthography, makes one suspicious of her claims. '*Madame la Comtesse, il y a déjà quelque temps que j'ay reçue vostre du* 20 *juillet, vieux stille, mais il m'a esté impossible d'y faire plus tost responce car vous croyes bien que dans ces tristes occations je n'ay manqué ni de lettres de condoliances n'y de visittes.*' [1]

[1] 'Asteur' was her spelling of 'à cette heure.'

To the end of her days she remained a thorough German. The splendour of the Court did not dazzle her: '*Ennui* reigns here more than anywhere else in the world.' The freedom of Marly displeased her, and she pities the young French nobles who do not know in what respect consists, because 'they have never seen a real court'; while of all the royal palaces she liked Fontainebleau best, because 'the rooms and galleries are so very German.' Equally German was her sense of humour. From time immemorial Germans have found something irresistibly comic in the spectacle of a heavy body sitting down unexpectedly. 'I have just been laughing till I cried,' she writes; 'I think I haven't laughed so heartily for eight years. A very fat lady, the Maréchale de Clérambault, nearly fell into the fire. She stumbled so funnily over one of my little dogs that I don't think I have ever seen anything more comic in my life. Mme. de Châteauthiers caught her by the arm and saved her, and she didn't hurt herself.' It is only fair to add that Madame was equally amused when a similar accident happened to herself.

Her dislike of things French extended to French cookery. French soups and stews she never touched. 'I only eat of a few dishes,' she says, 'mutton, for example, roast chicken, veal kidneys, beef and salad. When I was in Holland I also tried plover's eggs, but I ate so many that I was sick, and have disliked them ever since.' France was consequently a land of dearth for her. 'Oh, for a good *birambrod!*' she cries pathetically, 'or a good beer-soup! *They* don't give you stomach-ache.' But relief was sometimes forthcoming in the shape of a present of sausages from the aunt at Hanover, and English oysters were not despised. In a P.S. to her aunt she says: 'We rose from table half an hour ago. Mme. de Chartres was dining with us, a thing which doesn't often happen. Monsieur, she, and I, ate nearly two hundred English

oysters between us. For my part, I have fifty inside me ; Mme. de Chartres the same number, and Monsieur must have eaten eighty. . . .'

But, in spite of occasional orgies, Madame was an abstemious woman. Her supper in summer consisted of 'the legs of a young quail, a quarter of a lettuce, and five little peaches.' Nor did she, in Teutonic fashion, linger long over the mid-day meal. 'All through the year,' she writes in 1707, 'I dine alone; consequently I get it over as quickly as possible. Nothing is so annoying as to eat alone with twenty great fellows round you, watching you bite and counting every mouthful. That is why I finish my dinner in less than half an hour.' For drunkenness she had a healthy contempt. 'Papa,' she says proudly, 'never drank.' French wines did not appeal to her, and she annually imported from the Palatinate a supply of Bacharach, which she believed to be necessary for her health. The French apology for beer excited her disgust; but her pet aversion in drinks was coffee. 'I can't think,' she says, 'how people can like it. It tastes horrible and smells to me like bad breath. The late Archbishop of Paris[1] smelt just the same.' And again: 'I learn with pain, dear Louise, that you have taken to drinking coffee; nothing in the world is more unwholesome, and every day I see people who are forced to give it up because it has made them seriously ill. The Princesse de Hanau died of it in frightful agony. After her death they found coffee in her stomach, where it had produced small ulcers. Let that be a warning to you, dear Louise.' In fact, there was no crime of which coffee was not capable. If there was sickness in Hanover, it must be due to the prevalence of the coffee habit; and, when the Grand Dauphin died in 1711 of small-pox, Madame, with some others, was of opinion that coffee was at the bottom of it.

[1] Harlay.

Somewhat Teutonic, too, at that epoch was her taste for literature. From her father she had inherited a passion for the theatre and a certain critical faculty. She thoroughly appreciated Molière. '*Tartuffe*' was her favourite play, but '*Les Femmes savantes*' ran it hard for first place. 'I know it,' she says, 'nearly by heart, and I have seen it a hundred times, and yet it makes me laugh every time I see it again.' '*Le Malade imaginaire*' appealed to her least. She read '*Télémaque*' in manuscript, and had a considerable library of her own, which included a unique collection of *chansons* bequeathed to her by the Grande Mademoiselle.

Like all possessors of books, she suffered much at the hands of borrowers. 'Thank you,' she writes to the Raugrave Louise in 1706, 'for the slates. I have put them in my library, for you have no idea how many books I have lost. Now, when I lend a book, I enter the name on the slate, and rub out when it is returned.' In science, too, she took a dilettante interest. 'On going through my furs I found they were full of moth. But, as the proverb says, "there's a bright side to every misfortune," and I amused myself by putting the creatures under the microscope.' She kept up a long correspondence with Leibnitz, whom she held in great esteem, though her opinion of *savants* in general was far from flattering. 'It is seldom,' she says, 'that *savants* are clean, that they don't smell unpleasantly, and that they understand a joke.'

But Madame had more serious interests even than literature and science. Religion, except in its formal and ceremonial expressions, did not, as a rule, enter much into the life of her contemporaries at the French Court. But Madame, who was German in her prejudices, was also German in her reverence, and was incapable of thrusting the serious problems of life permanently into the back-

ground. Brought up in the Protestant faith, she had been compelled by reasons of state to embrace Roman Catholicism at the time of her marriage. But, though she conformed to its outward ordinances, the new creed had little hold over her imagination, and to the end of her days she thought, with her father, that 'monks and priests were worse than the devil.' Nor did the ceremonies of the Church appeal to her. Sermons and singing sent her to sleep; Holy Week, with its numerous services, was 'the tedious week'; the Fête-Dieu, with its much kneeling, was equally irksome. 'If it doesn't please the dear God more than it pleases me,' she says, 'the priests are much to be pitied.' On the occasion of the Jubilee in 1696 she wrote: 'We are soon going to lead a very tedious existence here, for we have got a Jubilee—a most inappropriate name, for nothing is more melancholy. We shall be constantly packed off to church, we shall have to eat a lot of fish, to fast, and communicate. Besides, as long as the thing lasts, there will be no amusements, no comedy or opera.'

Her religion, indeed, was not a matter of services; it was, as she explains, 'a little religion of her own,' and, if it was somewhat limited, it was based on a spirit of common sense and tolerance that was a good deal in advance of her age. 'Priests,' she says, 'can't get on without disputes: when they haven't got to dispute with other creeds they quarrel among themselves, as I see here every day. I always hold by what good, honest Colonel Webenheim used to say to me: "There is only one good and true religion in the world, and you will find it among all creeds and in every country—it is the religion of good people."' Intolerance of all kinds was repugnant to her, and Luther, in her opinion, was as much to blame as his opponents. 'Dr. Luther was like all churchmen,' she says; 'they all want to be the masters and to govern.'

But, if she disapproved of Luther, she retained a warm affection for the Lutheran hymns. 'Do you imagine, dear Louise,' she wrote in 1720, 'that I never sing the Lutheran psalms and hymns? I still know a number of them by heart, and sing them. I must tell you what happened to me twenty-five years ago with my singing. I was in the Orangerie, which was being frescoed by M. Rousseau, who was a Protestant. He happened to be at the top of the scaffolding, but I thought I was alone and began to sing aloud the sixth psalm. I had scarcely finished the first verse when I heard somebody coming down from the scaffolding in a great hurry. It was M. Rousseau, and he threw himself at my feet. I thought he was going mad. "Good gracious, Rousseau!" I said; "what is the matter with you?" "Is it possible, Madame," he cried, "that you still remember our psalms and hymns? May God bless you, and keep you in your good resolutions."'

Besides singing hymns Madame read her Bible. She possessed three, and read three chapters daily. 'Yesterday,' she writes on one occasion, 'I read six, because I shouldn't have had time for reading this morning, as we have been stag-hunting.' In her religion, as in all her life, Madame was superbly sincere, and every now and then there are some delightfully human touches in her reflections. 'Would to God,' she wrote in 1701 (doubtless with Madame de Maintenon in her mind), 'would to God we were sure of being able to love and to hate after death! Dying wouldn't be so terrible then.'

She also tells a delicious story of her childhood. 'I always try to be sincere with God. This reminds me of worthy Mme. de Landass. When "die Kolb" was ill Mme. de Landass replaced her, and used to sleep in my room. She said her prayers morning and evening, out loud, and when she came to the Lord's Prayer she always omitted

the clause "As we forgive them that trespass against us." It has often made me laugh.'

Every wise person has a hobby. Madame's was the collecting of medals. 'You have no idea,' she writes, 'what an amusement it is to me. I spend whole days looking at them. . . . Last Monday I bought another hundred and fifty with the money the king gave me on New Year's Day. I have now a room full of gold medals —a complete set of all the emperors from Julius Cæsar to Heraclius; none is wanting, and among them are some rare pieces that the king hasn't got. I bought them all very cheap; for two hundred and sixty of them I merely paid their price avoirdupois. I have four hundred and ten gold medals in all.'

Even dearer than her medals to the heart of Madame were her pets. 'Yesterday,' she wrote in 1702, 'I gave Mme. de Châteauthiers a handsome parrot that talks admirably. I wanted to see what it would say, and I had it brought into my room. My dogs were jealous, and Mione began to bark at the intruder. The parrot merely said, "Give us your paw." I wish you could have seen Mione's astonishment when she heard the bird speak. She stopped barking, looked first at it and then at me, and, as the bird continued talking, she grew frightened and went and hid under the sofa. Whereupon the parrot burst into a peal of laughter.' Apparently the shock was too much for Mione, for a month later Madame wrote to her half-sister Louise: 'I don't know whether you are fond of dogs, and whether you will understand the real loss I sustained the very day you were writing to me. Mione, the dog I loved best, is dead.' But there were plenty left, spaniels being the favourites. 'I went for a drive in the forest,' she writes from Fontainebleau, 'but we had scarcely got outside the gates when the coachman upset us, and sent us rolling one over the other. One of my ladies had her

shoulder cut by fragments of glass. . . . I had seven dogs with me in the carriage, and not one was in the least damaged.'

Perhaps any but a very pronounced dog-lover would consider the privileges which Madame allowed her pets excessive. They were born, lived, and died in her study. One was called 'Robe,' 'because it was born on my velvet dress.' The same Robe 'has just jumped on to my table, even on to the paper, and smudged out a whole word.' But Madame took her pets very seriously, and she even dallied with Leibnitz's theory that their souls might be immortal.

A life so full of occupations and interests could never really be dull, and in her heart of hearts Madame recognised the fact: 'Death,' she remarks sagely, 'is the last stupidity of which we are guilty.' But there were times when the conduct of Monsieur and the intrigues of the Court were a sore trial; and in her gloomier moments she expressed herself with a vigour that must not be taken too literally. 'I have always regretted,' she says in one outburst, 'that I am a woman. I would much rather have been Elector than Madame.' And again: 'Happy are the unmarried! I should have been well pleased if I had been allowed not to marry, but to live in happy isolation. The best husband isn't worth the devil.' When, however, the chance of gaining this 'happy isolation' presented itself, Madame clung to the Court with a tenacity that was almost comic. By the terms of her marriage contract, in the event of her husband's predeceasing her, she was to have the option of retiring to the Château of Montargis or of entering a convent. Saint-Simon gives an amusing account of her despair when the sudden death of Monsieur, in 1701, brought her face to face with the dread alternative.

'Madame was in her *cabinet* at Saint-Cloud. She had

never had great affection or esteem for Monsieur, but she felt her loss and the fall it involved; and in her grief she kept screaming with all her might, "*Point de couvent! qu'on ne parle pas de couvent!*"'

Nor was the Château de Montargis a more alluring prospect, for, as she explains, 'as soon as you are away from the Court you are forgotten; you lose all respect and consideration, and nobody comes to see you.' So, although she had been suffering from a sharp attack of fever, as soon as Monsieur had breathed his last she got into a carriage, with her ladies, and drove off to Versailles.

It must be admitted that Louis behaved generously on this occasion. He had never really disliked Madame, though she had been annoying; and no doubt he felt a genuine remorse for the bitter words that had been spoken at his last interview with an only brother. He was in a softened mood, willing to forget past wrongs and anxious to atone for his own shortcomings. But before the reconciliation was complete Madame had to sit on the stool of penance for a very humiliating quarter of an hour.[1] Conscious of the precariousness of her position she had determined to approach the king through Madame de Maintenon, and, as a preliminary, to make her peace with the all-powerful lady. The step cost Madame a good deal of humbled pride, but the pill had to be swallowed, and Mme. de Ventadour was sent as ambassadress to the Maintenon to beg for an interview. Madame de Maintenon promised that she would pay Madame a visit after dinner, but stipulated that Mme. de Ventadour should be present throughout the interview, which was fixed for Sunday, the day after the return of the Court from Marly. After the

[1] The following account of the interview is a paraphrase of Saint-Simon. Saint-Simon has a way of dramatising his facts, and, no doubt, his narrative of what took place on this occasion is more picturesque than verbally accurate; but it is probably substantially correct, as the details were furnished by Mme. de Ventadour, who was an eye-witness.

usual compliments, everyone, except Mme. de Ventadour and the two protagonists, left the room. Madame begged her visitor to be seated (a condescension which showed how great was her need), and began to complain of the indifference with which the king had treated her during her recent illness. Madame de Maintenon let her finish, and then replied that the king had authorised her to say that their common loss effaced all past differences from his mind, provided that he had more cause to be satisfied with Madame's conduct in the future than he had been in the past; and that, in saying this, he was not referring only to what had happened in connection with the Duc de Chartres, but to things which concerned him still more nearly, of which he had been unwilling to speak, but which were the real cause of the indifference which he had purposely shown to Madame during her recent illness. At this, Madame, who fancied herself on safe ground, began to protest that, except in connection with her son, she had never said or done anything that could give offence; and launched out into complaints and justifications. In the midst of her protests, however, Madame de Maintenon drew a letter from her pocket, showed it to Madame, and asked her whether she recognised the handwriting. It was, indeed, a letter to the Duchess of Hanover, in which, after giving the news of the Court, Madame had said in plain terms that people didn't know what to think of the relations between the king and Madame de Maintenon, whether they were marriage or concubinage. After which she had touched on home and foreign politics and dwelt at length on the exhaustion of the country, which, she said, was past curing. This letter had been opened at the post, and in view of the serious nature of its contents the authorities, instead of making the customary extract, had sent the original to the king. You may imagine Madame's feelings at sight of this

letter. She began to cry, while Madame de Maintenon gently rubbed in the enormity of each section of the document, sent, as it was, to a foreign country. Finally, Mme. de Ventadour began to talk at random to give Madame time to recover sufficiently to say something. Her best excuse was to confess frankly what she could not deny. She protested her repentance, begged for pardon, and was lavish with prayers and promises.

When the subject was at last exhausted, Madame de Maintenon begged to be allowed to say a word about herself, and to express her regret that, in spite of the honour which Madame had formerly shown her by desiring her friendship and promising her own, she had of late years completely changed. Once more Madame thought she was on safe ground. She replied that she was all the more delighted at this chance of an explanation, inasmuch as it was *she* who had a right to complain ; since it was Madame de Maintenon who had abandoned *her* and forced her in the end to discontinue the friendship, though she had long tried to maintain the old relations. As before, Madame de Maintenon allowed her to indulge freely in complaints, regrets, and even reproaches. At last she admitted to Madame that it was true that she had been the first to break off the friendship ; but that she had no cause to reproach herself, and that her reasons had been such that she could not have acted differently. Thereupon Madame redoubled her complaints and begged eagerly to be told what these reasons might be. Then Madame de Maintenon produced her trump card. She said that the reason was a secret which had never left her lips, though the person to whom she had promised silence had been dead for ten years ; and then proceeded to relate a thousand things, one more insulting than another, which Madame had said of her to the Dauphine at a time when the latter had been on bad terms with her, and which the Dauphine

had repeated, word for word, on the occasion of their reconciliation. At this second blow Madame looked as if she had been turned to stone. There were several moments of silence, and Mme. de Ventadour once more began to chatter in order to give Madame time to recover. In the end she could think of nothing better than to repeat her previous performance. She caught hold of Madame de Maintenon's passive hands, confessed her fault, expressed the sincerity of her repentance, and begged for pardon with tears and entreaties. Madame de Maintenon enjoyed her triumph coldly for a while; but at last (as she had always intended) she allowed herself to be moved. The two women kissed, and swore oblivion for the past and friendship for the future; Madame de Ventadour began to cry for joy; and the seal of the reconciliation was a promise of the king's forgiveness, and a pledge that he would not say a word to Madame of the two matters which had been discussed.[1]

The interview had been a terrible humiliation for Madame; but it had practical results, and there was no more talk of Montargis or a convent. She kept her rooms at Versailles and Marly, and her pension was increased. Occasionally, too, she was admitted to the *sanctuaire*, where her presence was not welcomed by the other princesses. In October of 1701 she wrote from Fontainebleau: 'Yesterday evening the king allowed me to follow him to his *cabinet* after supper. His Majesty was most gracious, talked to me, and offered me oranges and lemons. This made some people jealous. Mme. d'Orléans and Mme. la Duchesse made faces, and were so furious

[1] It is amusing to compare with this Madame's own account of the interview: 'I admitted that I had been vexed with her, thinking that she was depriving me of the King's favour and that she detested me, as I had also heard from the Dauphine; but I said that I would gladly forget everything if she would be my friend in the future. Thereupon she said many flattering things, promised me her friendship, and we kissed.'

at seeing me in the *cabinet* that they nearly exploded. They couldn't contain themselves; no more could the Duchesse de Bourgogne, who kept hinting to the king that he should get rid of me; but I looked her straight in the face and covered her with confusion. At last I withdrew discreetly, fearing that they would annoy the king with their jealousy.'

The eternal friendship sworn with Madame de Maintenon was, like many other friendships of the kind, of short duration. But the king, though not by any means always cordial, kept to the letter of his compact and sometimes went out of his way to show his sister-in-law little acts of kindness; and Madame, for her part, was more guarded with her tongue and her pen than she had been in the past.

The first years of widowhood were tedious, as Court etiquette forbade her to appear in places of public amusement. 'Every day,' she wrote in December 1701, 'I hear people saying, "To-day there's a new opera, to-morrow there will be a new comedy." This year—a thing which has never happened before—there have been six new comedies and three new operas. I believe the devil has done it on purpose to make me discontented.' However, the king, who knew and sympathised with her weakness, contrived some alleviation. 'A novel and strange sight,' says Saint-Simon, 'was witnessed this year (1702) at Fontainebleau—Madame at the public comedy in the second year of her widowhood! She did at first make some show of reluctance, but the king said that what took place in his palace must not be regarded as a public spectacle.'

On one occasion Louis even took her part against the Duchesse de Bourgogne. The *dames du palais* of the latter had taken advantage of Madame's enforced absence from public entertainments to claim precedence over her

ladies. Madame was very sensitive on such points, and she protested to the Duc de Noailles, who replied that it had been done by order of the king. Whereupon Madame went straight to his Majesty and asked if this was a fact. The king, who also was inflexible on questions of etiquette, 'grew red with vexation,' denied all knowledge of the affair, and took measures to prevent a repetition of the offence. 'I'm not going to give up my rank or my prerogatives,' says Madame defiantly, in a letter to her aunt, 'however much favour certain people enjoy; and the king is too just to allow it.'

Madame was almost the only person at Court whose heart the Duchesse de Bourgogne had not won by her grace and amiability. Perhaps a touch of feminine jealousy may have been at the bottom of the dislike; for, after the death of the Dauphine, Madame had been the first lady in the land until the arrival of the duchess relegated her again to the second place. But there were other reasons besides. Madame held rigid views on the proper deportment and behaviour of young people, and the duchess's light-hearted and irresponsible ways did not fit in with the older lady's idea of decorum. 'Good God!' she wrote in 1698, 'in my humble opinion the Duchesse de Bourgogne is being shockingly brought up. I am really sorry for the girl. She begins singing in the middle of dinner, dances on her chair, and pretends to bow to the company. She makes the most hideous faces, tears the partridges and chickens with her hands, and sticks her fingers into the sauces. In a word, it is impossible to imagine anybody more ill-bred. And the people who are standing behind her cry, "What grace she has! How pretty she is!" She treats her father-in-law, the Dauphin, most disrespectfully, and calls him "thee and thou." They say she is even more familiar with the king.' And again in 1709 she writes: 'I can't count on the

friendship of the "young plant," who is badly brought up. All I can insist on is that, if she laughs at me, it shan't be to my face; that she shall answer when I ask her a question; that she shan't contradict me flatly when I say anything; and that she shall be polite when I pay her a visit.' The duchess's answer to Madame's complaints was that she was afraid of her; but we can well believe that the German ways and ungainly figure of the elder lady were an incitement to fun that sometimes proved too strong for the irrepressible little princess. There were other great people who could not resist the temptation of teasing Madame, or, at least, she thought so. 'I've got such a bad cough,' she writes in 1709, 'that I can't go out. I owe it to the courtesy of the Dauphin. Last Sunday it was bitterly cold, and they had lit a huge fire in the room where we were dining. If nobody sat in front of me, I had the great fire full in my face: the Dauphin could have warmed himself perfectly without the fire's incommoding me; but, as soon as anybody sat down opposite me, he made a sign to him with his hand to move. I at once got a headache, cough, and cold.'

But these slights, real or imaginary, were more than compensated for by an honour of which Madame was very sensible; for in 1710 her eldest grand-daughter was married to the Duc de Berry, who had always been a favourite—'Madame's Berry,' as the Dauphine used to call him. The new duchess was perhaps one of the most detestable and profligate women that a Court has ever produced; her character was a compound of mean and vulgar qualities, and her passions were unredeemed by any trait of romance or generous feeling. 'Yesterday evening,' writes Madame, shortly after the marriage, 'the Duchesse de Berry gave us all a great fright. She suddenly fainted dead away, and we thought it was an attack of apoplexy. But, after the Duchesse de Bourgogne

had sprinkled her face with vinegar, she came to and was horribly sick; which was not surprising. For two hours, at the theatre, she had been stuffing herself with all sorts of horrors, peaches *au caramel*, *marrons glacés*, gooseberry *pâte*, dried cherries, and a lot of lemon into the bargain. Then, at supper, she ate a quantity of fish, and drank proportionately.' Gluttony, indeed, was one of the least of her faults; but at the time of her marriage her full depravity was not yet realised: the Duchesse de Bourgogne tried to make a friend of her, and the Duc de Berry, who was of a confiding and unsuspicious temperament, thought her perfection. 'The Duc de Berry,' writes Madame, 'is delighted, and thinks she is the prettiest person in the world. As a matter of fact, she isn't pretty at all, either in face or figure. She is thick, squat, has long arms and short hips; she walks badly and is ungraceful in all that she does; makes horrible faces; has a tearful expression; is marked by small-pox; has red eyes—light blue in the iris—and a red complexion, and looks much older than she is. What is perfectly beautiful about her is her throat, her hands, and her arms, which are very white and well formed. Her feet, too, are good: I can't imagine why she totters so when she walks. With all this her father and husband think that Helen was not half as beautiful as the Duchesse de Berry.' This portrait, like Madame's description of herself, does not, we may be sure, err on the side of flattery; but a small picture at Versailles of the duchess, in the dress of the Carmelite nuns, hardly gives us a more pleasing impression, and discloses a puffy and discontented face that is singularly devoid of charm.

Needless to say, the Duchesse de Berry was never a favourite of Madame's. Madame was not afraid, at any time, of rating the young for their follies in good set terms, and a personal request from the king that she would act as mentor to the young bride, whose conduct was giving

offence, added a stimulus to her sense of duty. The encounters between the two ladies were frequent and sharp; but the duchess, strong in the support and affection of her father, generally snapped her fingers at her grandmother, and Madame got little satisfaction from her efforts except the pleasure of having had her say and done her duty. Madame has left an account of one of these skirmishes:

'*Versailles, October* 1, 1712.—The Duchesse de Berry is more insane and saucy than ever. Yesterday she tried to be rude to me, but I gave her a piece of my mind. She came to me dressed up to the eyes, with fourteen *poinçons* of the most beautiful diamonds in the world. She was all right except that she had put two patches on her face, which didn't suit her at all. As soon as she appeared, "Madame," I said, "you look splendid, but I think you have too many patches, and they don't look very distinguished. You are the first lady in the land, and your position requires rather more dignity than to wear patches like an actress on the stage." She made a face, and said, "I know you don't care for patches, but *I* do, and I intend to please nobody but myself." "That's an error," I said, "which is due to your extreme youth; for, rather than please yourself, you ought to think of pleasing the king." "Oh!" said she, "the king gets accustomed to anything, and I've made up my mind: I'm not going to bother about anybody." "With such sentiments," said I, "one can go far. Listen! When I tell you my opinion, I do so for your own good, because I am obliged to do so as your grandmother and because the king has told me to. Otherwise I shouldn't say a word." "Silence is golden," replied she, "for speech won't do any good and won't prevent me from doing as I please." "So much the worse for you," I said. "But as everything you are saying is only the error of youth, I hope you

will change. . . ." "I'm quite satisfied with myself," said she, "and I don't intend to change." "It's not enough," said I, "to be satisfied with yourself: you should want other people to be satisfied with you." Thereupon she got up. "There's a little head," said I, "which will give you a lot of trouble." "What do you mean by that?" she cried. "*You* understand," I replied, "and that's enough; but, even if you don't, experience will soon make you wiser." At this she left the room. In the evening I related the scene to her father. "Please teach your daughter," I added, "how she ought to speak to me. This time I was patient, but I cannot be sure that I shall always be so, and that I shan't explain to the king the way in which she receives my advice." My son was frightened, and begged me to say nothing to the king, promising to scold her soundly.'

Madame, according to Saint-Simon, was hardly ever ill; and, no doubt, all things considered, she was a robust woman. She continued to follow the chase on horseback long after she had passed the age at which ladies usually gave up such violent exertion—even after a fall from her horse had resulted in a broken wrist; and if her complexion suffered, her health, no doubt, benefited. But at the beginning of 1712 she had a serious illness. 'I don't want to put off writing to you,' she says in a letter to her half-sister Louise, 'for God knows how often I may be able to write again. I won't conceal from you that I am considered seriously ill. I don't *feel* so, but the doctors say that the less I feel the worse I really am. My appetite is good, but I am rather somnolent,[1] and I go to sleep everywhere, which is considered a very serious symptom here. Yesterday I was bled. . . . I am resigned

[1] Her letters at this time are said to show traces of this somnolence, and her pen has made great zigzags over the paper, as if she had fallen asleep while writing.

to the will of the Almighty, and quite calm, whatever happens. I neither desire nor fear death.' 'When I am seated,' she says a little later, 'I feel no discomfort, but as soon as I walk at all quickly I get out of breath, and the doctors fear an attack of apoplexy or dropsy.' By and by her left side swelled and breathing became difficult. In consequence of these symptoms she was obliged for a considerable time to place herself unreservedly in the hands of the doctors, and this must have been a sore trial; for Madame had inherited her father's disbelief in the profession, and considered the French doctors the most ignorant of all. Their favourite remedies inspired her with no confidence, and, not without reason, she ascribes the death of many of her friends and relatives to the excessive way in which they were bled. 'Hands off!' was accordingly the maxim on which she usually acted in dealing with her own medical advisers, and for the ordinary ailments of life she doctored herself. Like most people who distrust the experts, she had a touching belief in the infallibility of her own remedies. 'Milady Kent's powders' taken as snuff cured nettlerash; taken internally, they were good for small-pox. English drops (made of opium, asarum, and sassafras) were excellent for the chest. *Baume d'Augsbourg* cured headaches. *Pommade divine* was another universal remedy. 'In two days and a night it cured my sprained wrist: it is a precious thing; when I am feverish I rub my stomach with it, and when I have a cough I rub my chest.' Her ideas of anatomy were crude, and her diagnoses sometimes startling. 'When Mlle. de Valois (her grand-daughter) was quite a child I thought she would be pretty; but I was much mistaken; she has developed a great aquiline nose, which has spoiled her looks. I think I can guess what caused it. She was allowed to take snuff: *that's* what has made her nose grow so.'

Some of her remedies were exceedingly simple. 'Another time you prick your finger with a needle,' she writes, 'cut the nail a little, put the wounded part behind the ear, and rub gently. I will guarantee that you won't have an abscess.' Nor was she averse to experimenting, though in a cautious, tentative way. 'I still have M. Belosi's elixir against gravel,' she writes to the Electress Sophia. 'It is said to be a certain remedy, and has saved a number of people here. I sincerely hope it will cure you too. It is said not to be violent in its effects. But, when you have got it, *try it first on others*; in this way you will easily see what effect it has.' And, in her experiments, she knew where to draw the line. 'I never allow myself,' she says, 'to be rubbed with human fat: it is too disgusting.'

From her illness Madame slowly recovered, but the year[1] was a peculiarly fatal one to the French royal family, witnessing, as it did, the untimely death of both the Duke and Duchess of Burgundy. For the duke Madame had always had a great respect, tempered at times by a touch of contemptuous pity for his excessive asceticism: 'virtuous, just, and able,' was her summary of his character. Towards the duchess her feelings had been less cordial; but in the years that immediately preceded her death the young Dauphine had done a great deal to break down Madame's dislike, and the part she had played in promoting the Duc de Berry's marriage had been much appreciated by the elder lady. In the August of 1711 Madame had written: 'I assure you, it is not without reason that the Dauphin is so praised—he deserves it. The Dauphine, too, is beginning to make herself loved by everybody through her politeness.' (As a matter of fact, of course, she had been very popular from the first.) 'Last Monday I was invited to dinner with them.

[1] 1712.

Nobody could have been politer than they were; they helped me themselves. There were a dozen ladies present, and they spoke to all of them.'

But, apart from the natural grief which the mere suddenness of the calamity was certain to provoke in a heart so human as Madame's, the event was fraught with a peculiarly poignant and personal sorrow; for it involved her son in an odious suspicion which years could hardly dissipate. At that time any sudden and inexplicable death was sure to be attributed to poison; and, as the medical knowledge even of the best doctors was limited, deaths which we can now see to have been due to natural causes were regarded as suspicious. That suspicion should have fastened on the Duc d'Orléans can surprise nobody. He had, conceivably, something to gain from the crime; he dabbled in chemistry, a science which was regarded with much disfavour; he openly professed his contempt for all religion and morality; and his life was ostentatiously dissolute and depraved. But, with all his faults, he was not a man to commit a murder; and his political actions were generally characterised by a good-natured and easy tolerance that is not incompatible with sensuality. He had many of the qualities of our own Charles II and none of the devilry of the Borgias, and those who knew him best knew him to be incapable of so horrible a crime. 'I am sure of his innocence,' writes Madame; 'I would put my hand into the fire for it.' Fortunately, the king was of the same way of thinking, though, according to Saint-Simon, Madame de Maintenon tried to persuade him to the contrary; and no doubt it was partly to discourage malicious rumours and partly to show his confidence that Madame was admitted at last to what she calls '*le sanctuaire*'—that is to say, the select family group that was privileged to share the king's leisure hours. She makes no secret of her satisfaction. 'I am glad,' she

writes, 'that I have been admitted to the "sanctuary" for two reasons. First, it is the only place where one can *talk* to the king, and for me, who love and respect him, it was painful to be only able to speak to him at an audience. Secondly, it seemed to be a real disgrace to be the only member of the royal family who was excluded.'

It was a sad party that assembled in the royal *cabinet* to cheer the closing years of the much tried king. 'We talk a great deal of the past,' says Madame, 'but not a word of the present, nor of the war, nor of the prospects of peace. We don't mention the three [1] Dauphins, nor the Dauphine either, so as not to turn the king's thoughts on to them. As soon as he mentions them I begin to talk of something else, pretending not to have heard.' And, a little later, she writes: 'I don't say much to the king. The Comte de Toulouse tells him about his hunting, and describes how he is arranging his houses and dealing with his forests. His Majesty also talks to the princesses about their houses. I put in a word now and again. The king is good enough to inquire about my health; I tell him, and sometimes manage to make him laugh.' One can well believe that an account of Madame's ailments and cures, however humorously told, was a poor substitute for the cheerful prattle of the Duchesse de Bourgogne.

For Madame, 1714 was almost as sad a year as 1712. In May she sat by the death-bed of the Duc de Berry. 'It is a mercy for me,' she says naively, 'that the duke had long ceased to care for me; otherwise I should be inconsolable.' Still, the memory of days when he had been 'Madame's Berry,' 'the dear little duke' who could always make her laugh, made his sudden death a very real grief; and only a month later she was mourning for the aunt, the friend of her childhood, the Electress Sophia of

[1] Namely, Monseigneur, the Duc de Bourgogne, and the little Duc de Bretagne.

Hanover. 'Our loss,' she writes to her half-sister Louise, 'is immense; I can't stop crying. . . . The dear Electress was my one consolation in the countless sorrows that have assailed me. When I had told them to her and received her answer, I felt consoled. And now I feel as if I were alone in the world. I believe God has sent me this affliction to take away my fear of death, for certainly I shall now die without a regret.'

The year closed with a great fright, which, fortunately, proved nothing worse. In December she writes: 'I was sitting in my study after dinner when a valet of my son's came running in, pale as death, and crying, "Ah! Madame, Monsieur is so ill that he has fainted dead away." I jumped up and ran up the stairs. What frightened me so was that, when he was only four, my son had had a real attack of apoplexy, and, as these attacks are very prevalent just now, I expected to find him dead . . . but it was only a fainting fit, due to the fact that, though he had a fearful cough and a heavy cold, he had been guzzling and swilling with his daughter [Mme. de Berry], for that, alas! is what is always happening now in that quarter.'

Eight months later came the end of the long reign which had begun so brilliantly and closed in such disappointment and gloom. Louis was dying by inches in the great gilded chamber that looks on to the *Cour de Marbre*. 'He sent for me,' writes Madame, 'for the Duchesse de Berry, and all his daughters and grandchildren. He said good-bye to me so tenderly that I am still wondering why I didn't faint. He assured me that he had always loved me, more perhaps than I had imagined, and that he was sorry that he had sometimes given me pain. I threw myself on my knees, seized his hand and kissed it, and he kissed me. Then he spoke to the others and exhorted them to be united. I thought he meant it for me, and replied: "In that I will obey your

Majesty as long as I live." He turned to me with a smile, and said, "I wasn't speaking to you, for I know that you don't need to be warned: you are much too sensible. I meant it for the other princesses. . . ." The king showed a firmness that baffles description. Twice he remained for twenty-four hours without speaking to anybody; he was praying all the time and repeating incessantly, "My God, why dost Thou not take me?"'

The last seven years of Madame's life belong to the Regency and lie outside the scope of the present volume. As mother of the Regent she occupied a much more unassailable position than she had enjoyed as sister-in-law of the king; but, true to her principles, she never took advantage of it to intrigue for political power or to meddle in state affairs. To the last she kept up a close correspondence with the half-sister whom she hardly knew in the flesh, but who personified the family ties which had always retained such a strong hold on her imagination. We will leave her with the touching words which she wrote from her death-bed in 1722. 'May God convert my son! It is the only joy that I ask of Him for myself. . . .' 'But I must finish, dear Louise: I am too ill to write more to-day. However wretched I am, and until I receive the *coup de grâce*, I shall always love you, dear Louise, with all my heart.'

CHAPTER X

MONSEIGNEUR, THE GRAND DAUPHIN

Birth and character—Education—Becomes his own master—His amusements—The Dauphine—Mlle. Choin and the 'Parvulo' of Meudon—His indigestion—His indifference—Illness and death—Scene at Versailles—Funeral—The king receives visits of condolence at Marly.

MONSEIGNEUR, named Louis like his father, was born on November 1, 1661, and was the only one of six children who reached maturity. In infancy and early childhood he was delicate and had frequent attacks of fever, which more than once gave grounds for serious alarm. But he survived these early ailments and lived to enjoy a robust, if indolent, manhood.

If Monsieur had been the victim of neglect, Monseigneur may be said to have suffered from excessive attention. No prince was ever surrounded in childhood by men of higher character, or offered greater facilities for acquiring culture. Montausier was his *gouverneur* and Bossuet his tutor; and the studies he pursued under their direction included Latin, geography, philosophy (moral and political), rhetoric, logic, physics, anatomy, drawing, and the art of war. A famous collection of Latin authors was made for his use; the still more famous '*Discours sur l'Histoire universelle*,' and the '*Connaissance de Dieu et de Soi-même*,' were written for his instruction.[1] Unfortunately, in elaborating their scheme of education, his

[1] Both by Bossuet.

pastors and masters forgot to take into consideration the quality and capacities of the mind with which they were dealing, and, in their anxiety to pile on knowledge, they suffocated the feeble spark of intelligence and will that glowed within the pupil's brain. The results are best described in Saint-Simon's words.

'Monseigneur was neither vicious nor virtuous; entirely devoid of intelligence or knowledge and incapable of acquiring them; very idle, without imagination or activity, taste or discernment; born to *ennui*, which he imparted to others; a rolling stone which received its momentum from others; excessively obstinate, and small in everything; credulous and easily prejudiced; surrounded by the most pernicious influences, and incapable of freeing himself or realising that he needed to be freed; absorbed in his fat and his mental obscurity, and a man who, without any wish to do harm, would have been a pernicious king.'

Such was the man who emerged from one of the most conscientious attempts ever made to fit a future monarch for the performance of his high duties. The Court, not without reason, laid much of the blame for failure on the shoulders of Montausier, the supposed original of Molière's '*Misanthrope*,' a man who was known to the people as the courtier 'who always speaks the truth.' Montausier had been brought up as a Huguenot, and when, at the age of thirty-five, he joined the Roman Catholic Church, he did not abandon the austere and rather dour views of life which were characteristic of Calvinism. At the Court he enjoyed the reputation of saying disagreeable truths which were only tempered by an unconcealed admiration for the monarch. With his pupil he was extremely frank. One day he took him to a poor cottage, made him enter and survey the squalid surroundings, and, pointing to the occupants, 'Look,' he said, 'at the unhappy people who are living in this hovel: all of them, father, mother, and

children, work unceasingly from morning till evening to pay the gold with which your palaces are gilded: they endure hunger to supply the luxury of your table.' Uncompromising himself, Montausier would not allow others to flatter the young prince; the Dauphin was forbidden to read the laudatory dedications of the books presented to him, and his body was subjected to a rigorous discipline; all dainties were banished from his table, and, in spite of protests from the doctors, the child was compelled to observe the fasts of the Church in their minutest detail. Unfortunately, Montausier had none of the personal qualities which might at least have won his pupil's respect for these stern principles. He was conscientious but a tyrant, incapable of sympathy, intolerant of failure, and a firm believer in the rod. Few princes, outside Prussia, have been more consistently beaten than the Grand Dauphin. Dubois[1] relates a scene which happened on August 4, 1671—i.e. when the child was ten years old. The Dauphin, who had already been beaten in the morning, was saying his *Oraison dominicale* in the evening, and had twice made the same mistake. 'Thereupon M. de Montausier rose, took the Dauphin by both hands, dragged him into the schoolroom, and there gave him five cuts, with all his might, on each of his hands. The dear child shrieked terribly, and I wept with all my heart at seeing such cruelty. . . . The next day he showed me his hands, which were quite purple, and bruises on his arms.'

Montausier, whose sense of duty if narrow was stern, seldom left his charge: he accompanied the boy at his games, watched him at his lessons, and even slept in the same bedroom. One can easily understand what a crushing effect the constant presence of this man must have had on a child who was naturally timid as well as

[1] Valet de chambre to the Dauphin.

indolent, and it is not surprising that the rare absences of the *gouverneur* were hailed by the pupil with extravagant demonstrations of joy. But it was advisable not to demonstrate prematurely. On one occasion Montausier was starting for Paris, and the Dauphin, who was just beginning his last lesson for the day, expressed his joy at the deliverance by sounds which penetrated beyond the schoolroom. Montausier came back, gave his pupil three cuts with the ferule, and then started on his journey.

Bossuet, who was appointed tutor in succession to Perigny in 1670, was a man of a very different stamp. Learned, eloquent, and kind-hearted, he lacked, however, the intuition which gave Fénelon his extraordinary influence over children. In spite of the most praiseworthy attempts, he could never stoop to the level of the slow and immature mind which he had been set to cultivate. He would have made a splendid 'coach' to a clever student, but he was ineffective as tutor to a stupid child. The Dauphin respected but never loved him, and, realising that he was less formidable than Montausier, sometimes took liberties with him. One day, when the absence of Montausier had made the Dauphin unusually merry, he came into the schoolroom with a little dog in his arms and tried to make Bossuet kiss it; and, in the struggle which ensued, Bossuet's hat was knocked on to the ground. The incident is a trivial one, but serves to illustrate the perennial perplexity of a certain type of serious and learned man in the presence of impertinent and inconsequent boyhood. While Bossuet was pouring out his eloquence and learning, his royal pupil was registering a vow that when he was his own master he would never open another book. The vow was faithfully kept, and, his schooldays over, the Dauphin never read anything more exhausting than the Paris article in the *Gazette de France*, which contained the deaths and marriages.

In 1680, at the age of nineteen, the Dauphin became 'his own master,' and used his freedom to settle down to a life entirely destitute of ambition or useful activity. This self-effacement was not unpleasing to Louis XIV. No autocrat ever had a more complaisant son and heir. The Dauphin had been taught from earliest childhood to regard his father with almost superstitious reverence, and the feeling lasted till his death. He was admitted to the councils of state, but he took no interest in the business transacted there and never tried to influence affairs. On the rare occasions when he ventured to differ openly from the king the subject was never one of intrinsic importance. In 1707 Madame de Maintenon wrote: 'I had the misfortune to be present at a conversation between the king and the Dauphin which pained me extremely. I pass my life in trying to keep them united and in avoiding anything which might produce a misunderstanding between them, and now I see them ready to quarrel over a trifle. Monseigneur wanted to give a public ball to which everybody was to be admitted, and insisted that the Duchess of Burgundy (his daughter-in-law) should be present. The king replied with charming gentleness that he could not consent, and pointed out that, if the duchess was to be present, it would be most improper that all sorts and conditions of men should be there too. The duchess herself was quite prepared to go, for it makes no difference to *her* whether she dances with an actor or a Prince of the Blood. I can't tell you how much this little squabble has troubled me. . . . I fear all the causes for dissension that might so easily arise between a king of sixty-six and a Dauphin of forty-six.'

However, Madame de Maintenon's fears were groundless. In all essentials Monseigneur was a model of submissiveness and acquiesced without a murmur in the total lack of influence which was his portion. In return

his debts were paid out of the royal coffers and the purse-strings never tightly tied; in fact, the Dauphin enjoyed an income of 50,000 francs a month.

His personal appearance was not unpleasing, though his face lacked character. Saint-Simon, who excelled in word-painting, has left us a vivid description of him. 'He was rather above the medium height, very fat, but not obese, with a noble and distinguished air that had nothing repellent in it, and his face would have been handsome if his nose had not been accidentally broken by the Prince de Conti when, as children, they were playing together. He was fair-haired; and his face full and weather-beaten: he had the finest legs imaginable and singularly small feet. He felt his way as he walked, and put each foot twice to the ground; he was always afraid of falling, and if the road was not perfectly level he required assistance. He looked well on horseback and had a perfect seat, but he was a timid rider. He made Casau ride ahead of him when he was hunting, and if he lost sight of him he was helpless. He seldom went faster than a hand-gallop, and often waited under a tree to see what would happen. . . . He was a great eater, like all the royal family, and very fond of the pleasures of the table; but not indecently so. His character was nil. He had fair common-sense but no wit; a natural dignity and an excessive obstinacy. He was gentle through indolence and a sort of stupidity; hard at bottom, with a superficial good-nature which was chiefly reserved for valets and retainers: with them he was extraordinarily familiar, but, otherwise, indifferent to the sufferings or griefs of others; and that rather through want of imagination than because he had a bad heart.'

The first and most important duty of a Dauphin, when he had completed his education, was to secure the succession to the throne, and the task of providing him with a wife became the chief preoccupation of the king and his

ministers. The Dauphin showed himself delightfully accommodating. 'The king,' says Madame, 'asked him whether he could resign himself to marrying an ugly woman: to which he replied that he really didn't mind. Provided that his wife were intelligent and virtuous he would be satisfied, no matter how ugly she were.' He was taken at his word, and Marie Anne Christine Victoire, Electoral Princess of Bavaria, became his bride in 1680.

The new Dauphine was not designed by nature to shine at the French Court. 'If she has wit,' the king had said, 'I shall rally her about her plain looks.' But poor Marie Anne, '*ennemie de la médisance et de la moquerie*,'[1] was not the kind of person to understand French *raillerie* or even to appreciate the better side of the French character. The very language was a stumbling-block, and the title of her husband became in her mouth 'Monssigneur.' To Bessola, her maid and confidante, the only one of her German servants whom she was allowed to keep, she poured out her troubles in the beloved tongue of the Fatherland. The Dauphin had been prepared to like his wife; but this unsociable and ailing woman was incomprehensible to him: he soon abandoned his efforts to please and sought cheap conquests among actresses on the Paris stage. The king tried long and patiently to draw his daughter-in-law out, and win her to the performance of the duties which her rank and position demanded. But Marie Anne, who was generally in bad health, shrank from publicity and hated the ceremonies which were the very foundation of Court life at Versailles. In the end, Louis confessed himself beaten, and, while remaining kind, ceased to be assiduous. Left to herself and a few friends, of whom Madame was one, the Dauphine passed a melancholy existence with Bessola in

[1] Saint-Simon.

her *petits appartements*, which had 'neither air nor view.' Her malady, really consumption, was put down to a fanciful form of 'vapours,' and she used to say bitterly, '*Il faudra que je meure pour me justifier.*' After ten unhappy years she died at Versailles in April 1690, leaving three sons, the Ducs de Bourgogne, d'Anjou, and de Berry, none of whom was destined to sit on the throne of France.

In spite of his heavy, unattractive mind, there were many ladies who would gladly have shared with the widower his splendid position. Madame had designs on him for her daughter; but the Dauphin upset all calculations by making a choice of his own, and in a most unexpected quarter. With an imitation, whose flattery was probably not altogether appreciated in high quarters, he determined to have his Maintenon, and he chose her among the maids of honour of the Princesse de Conti, his half-sister and intimate friend. Mlle. Choin, niece of a certain Madame de Bury, will always remain one of the most mysterious personages in history. It was certainly not to beauty that she owed her power of charming. 'She was,' says Saint-Simon, 'a stout girl, squat, dark, ugly, with a flat nose.' However, her intimate friends described her as witty, modest, lively, unambitious, fond of the table and conversation. Why, being witty and unambitious, she should have cared for the Dauphin, or how, being ugly, she could have attracted him, remains an unsolved mystery. The one thing certain is that they were mutually drawn together and eventually married,[1] though the exact year of the marriage is not known. The course of their love did not always run smoothly. In 1694, Mlle. Choin, by order of the king, was dismissed from the service of the Princesse de Conti and bidden to withdraw

[1] The fact that Mlle. Choin was allowed to remain at Meudon while Monseigneur was dying, and the letter of the Duc de Bourgogne to her after his father's death, are conclusive evidence on this point.

to Paris. The reason given by Saint-Simon for this sudden banishment is too inherently improbable to be accepted without reserve, but it is quite possible that the king learned, through letters intercepted in the post, of the influence which Mlle. Choin was beginning to exercise in the Dauphin's entourage, and determined to put a stop to it. In this, however, he failed. The Dauphin continued to visit Mlle. Choin in Paris, where she lived at the house of her relative la Croix, a wealthy *receveur des finances*; and, when he came into possession of Meudon in 1695, he used to bring her there incognito to share his frequent visits. A certain mystery was observed about her movements, which was kept up long after the secret of her position had become public property. On the eve of the Dauphin's arrival at Meudon she would leave Paris at nightfall, in a hired carriage, accompanied by a single *femme de chambre*. At the Château she was lodged, at first in the Entre-sol adjoining the Dauphin's rooms, subsequently in a large apartment at the top of the house. She never appeared on public occasions and was seldom seen. In the early morning she crossed the house on her way to the chapel to hear Mass, and sometimes, in summer, she walked in the gardens at midnight to breathe the air. But her presence was a secret to nobody. The king made inquiries about her health, Madame de Maintenon visited her, and the intimates of Monseigneur, including his children, were, one by one, introduced to the private circle in which she ruled as Dauphine, and to which the courtiers of Versailles gave the name of the *Parvulo* of Meudon. There she occupied an armchair in the presence of Monseigneur, while the Duchess of Burgundy, whom she often scolded, had to be content with a stool: there, too, she spoke of her step-children as 'le Duc de Bourgogne, la Duchesse de Bourgogne,' instead of 'Monsieur le Duc de Bourgogne' and 'Madame la Duchesse de Bourgogne,'

and assumed the same privileges as were accorded to Madame de Maintenon at Versailles.

Like Madame de Maintenon, too, she was singularly free from any desire to feather her own nest. From the Dauphin she received only 1,600 *louis d'or* a year. When he was expecting to be sent to command the army in Flanders, in 1708, the Dauphin made a will in which he bequeathed a large part of his property to Mlle. Choin. He apprised her of the fact and showed her a sealed letter containing full instructions, which was to be given to her in case anything happened to himself. Mlle. Choin was much touched by this mark of thoughtfulness and affection, but assured the Dauphin that the income of 1,000 crowns which she had saved was enough for her personal wants, and forthwith insisted on his putting the will and the letter into the fire in her presence. In the same spirit, probably, though Saint-Simon assigns less disinterested motives, she refused, in 1709, a pension from the king and the offer of rooms at Versailles and Marly. Whatever her motives, she certainly had no desire to change her actual mode of life, and preferred Paris to the Court. As soon as Monseigneur left Meudon she returned to the house of la Croix, and led a quiet, unostentatious life, only visiting a few friends, and at times when she was certain of being the only guest.

The question of the Spanish succession roused Monseigneur from his usual torpor. Charles II of Spain, by a will which had been the result of much dark intriguing, had bequeathed his crown to the Duc d'Anjou, grandson of Louis XIV and second son of Monseigneur. To accept the legacy meant war, and France had need of peace. Nevertheless, the offer was a tempting one. At the council which met to decide the question the Dauphin, contrary to his habit, spoke warmly in favour of acceptance, and, finally, turning to the king, said firmly but

respectfully, 'that he took the liberty of demanding his inheritance, since he was in a position to accept it. That the crown of Spain was his by his mother's right, but that, to secure the peace of Europe, he would gladly yield it to his second son, but to no other.'

The final decision was in conformity with his wishes, and he could talk proudly of 'the king my father, and the king my son.' 'Never,' says Madame, 'have I seen him so much moved as on this occasion. He seems to rejoice from the bottom of his heart that his son is king.' The long and disastrous wars which were the result hardly affected him at all.

The great events of Monseigneur's existence were few and far between, but 1701 was a year which was destined to mark deeply in his life and remain, ever afterwards, full of solemn and gloomy associations; for it was the year in which he had his great attack of indigestion and believed himself to be dying. Like all the Bourbons, he was a mighty eater as well as a mighty hunter. On Saturday, March 19, the eve of Palm Sunday, he had come over to Marly from Meudon, and, at the king's supper, had stuffed himself with fish. After saying good-night to the king he had descended to his own apartment, which was on a level with the gardens, and, there, he had knelt down at his prie-Dieu before undressing. His prayers finished, he had risen from the prie-Dieu and seated himself in a chair to remove his clothes, when, all of a sudden, he lost consciousness. His servants, thoroughly alarmed, rushed upstairs for Fagon and a surgeon, and the king, disturbed at his prayers by the commotion, hurried by a private staircase to Monseigneur's room, where he was soon joined by the Duchess of Burgundy and other members of the Court.

'They found Monseigneur, half naked, being walked. or rather dragged, up and down his room. He failed to recognise the king, who spoke to him, or any other of the

spectators, but defended himself as well as he could against Felix the surgeon, who, in this emergency, and believing he was dealing with a case of apoplexy, ventured to bleed the sufferer as he walked. The operation was successful; Monseigneur recovered consciousness and asked for a confessor. The king had already sent for the curé. The patient was given quantities of an emetic which was long in operating, but which at 2 A.M. produced prodigious results. At half-past two, as the danger seemed over, the king, who had been weeping freely, withdrew to bed, leaving instructions that he was to be called if any alarming symptoms should supervene; but at 5 A.M. the doctors, reassured as to the patient's condition, cleared the room of visitors and left him to sleep. The Dauphin escaped with a fright and a week in bed; during which he played at cards most of the time, or watched others play, and was visited twice daily by the king.'[1]

His convalescence was marked by a strange scene. It was traditional for Paris to love its Dauphins, and Monseigneur enjoyed unusual popularity. His affability towards inferiors impressed the popular imagination and led to his being credited with many other excellent qualities which, unfortunately, he did not possess. The herring-women of the market determined to show their loyalty, and deputed four of their number to journey to Marly and inquire after Monseigneur's health. They were admitted to the sick-chamber; one of them flung her arms round the patient's neck and kissed him on both cheeks: the others contented themselves with kissing his hands. Bontemps, the king's *premier valet*, showed them over the Château and gave them dinner; after which they were sent away with a handsome present of money from the Dauphin and the king. Part of it they spent in a sumptuous 'Te Deum' at the Church of St. Eustache, the rest in an equally

[1] Saint-Simon.

sumptuous banquet. The sudden death of Monsieur in the same year helped to impress upon the Dauphin the gravity of the danger he had escaped. He abandoned his irregular life, and never again did he exceed at table.

Meudon, where he kept his own pack of hounds and indulged an inherited taste for building, was the home of his choice. At Versailles or Marly he was bored and constrained, and might be seen blowing on his fingers in a corner of the room, or looking round at the company with dull unquestioning eyes. At Meudon he was his own master and free to live the life that pleased him best, that, namely, of the least intelligent of country gentlemen. It was there, too, that the little Court, which looked to him as its chief, assembled to gossip and cabal. As Dauphin, Monseigneur was one of the least influential persons in the land, and any marked attention to his person a sure passport to the king's disfavour; but there were people who were prepared to play a waiting game and stake their all on the chances of his ultimate accession to the throne; and, as the king began to show signs of age, the activity of the Meudon clique increased. The heart and soul of this small band was centred in four women—the Princesse de Conti, the clever and malicious Mme. la Duchesse (both illegitimate daughters of the king), and the two Lislebonnes, nieces of the crafty Vaudemont, whose character and appearance Saint-Simon sums up in the following words: 'Their virtue and their faces were alike imposing: the elder, simply dressed and without beauty, inspired respect; the younger, beautiful and graceful, attracted; both were tall and well made; but anyone who had an eye could see that they exuded the spirit of the League at every pore. Neither of them was cruel for cruelty's sake; on the contrary, they behaved in such a way as to banish all suspicion; but, if their plans were crossed or their interests at stake, they were terrible.'

These four women worked together in perfect harmony, content to defer the final struggle for supremacy till the day when supremacy would mean power. Among the men who formed, as it were, an outer ring round this inner core, were Vendôme and his brother le Grand Prieur, M. de Luxembourg, and some others like d'Harcourt, the Chancellor, and the Maréchal d'Huxelles, who took pains to conceal their divided allegiance from the royal eye.

It was not the character or the conversation of the host which rendered Meudon attractive. 'Monseigneur,' says Madame, 'doesn't really take pleasure in anything. He hunts nearly every day, but he's just as happy riding at a walking pace for four miles on end, without saying a word to a single soul, as he is at the most exciting run.' And, when he spoke, his conversation was neither sparkling nor original. 'The Dauphin,' wrote Madame, 'remarked to me that if it freezes hard before St. Martin's day, the winter is not severe.' And again: 'The Dauphin, on his return from the Palatinate, said to me, "When you told me, Madame, that the hares and trout of the Palatinate were better than those of France, I thought that love of your country made you exaggerate; but, since I have been to the Palatinate, I cannot eat our own hares or trout, and I see that you were right."'

Sometimes he would pass whole days in bed; at others he would be dragged about in a chair, holding a cane in his hand and tapping his boots without saying a word; or again, he would pass his afternoons in the gardens in the same silence, watching his builders at their work. 'He is,' says Madame, 'the most incomprehensible man in the world. He isn't a fool at all, and yet he always behaves as if he were, through idleness and indifference.'

Although, in his day, he had nominally commanded armies, he was extraordinarily indifferent to the success of his country's arms, even at the most exciting crises. 'For

four days,' wrote Madame in 1695, 'we had been expecting news of a battle and we were mortally anxious. At last, on Tuesday, the long expected courier arrived. When we saw M. Barbesieux (Minister of War) on his way to the king's *cabinet*, we were all eager to know what had happened. The Princesse de Conti went to find the Dauphin and said, "A courier has come, and M. Barbesieux is with the king: you ought to go and find out what has happened." "I?" said the Dauphin, "I shan't go!" "Why not?" asked the princess. "Because," replied the Dauphin, "I don't care what news he has brought." "But, Monseigneur," insisted the princess, "you see that everybody is anxious; if you won't do it for your own sake, at least go and ask for news to please us." The Dauphin: "Do you wish me, ladies, to go and say to the king that you have sent me for the news? If you do, I will go; but I shan't go on my own account." The princess: "Don't say that, Monseigneur. Why, Monsieur went to see the king the moment the courier arrived." The Dauphin: "That's because Monsieur is more inquisitive than I am."'

In 1708, when the expectation of a battle, which was to save Lille, kept everybody glued to the windows, he displayed the same extraordinary indifference. He happened to be present when Chamillart brought the king the harrowing tidings that Lille was invested by the enemy and read the despatch aloud. Half way through the reading the Dauphin was going off, but the king called him back to hear the end. When the letter was finished the Dauphin went off again without making a single observation. Entering the room of the Princesse de Conti he found there Mme. d'Espinoy, whose children had large estates in Flanders, and who had been intending to pay a visit to Lille. 'Madame,' he said with a laugh, 'how about your journey to Lille now!' and proceeded to tell

them that the place was besieged. The Princesse de Conti was shocked at this insensibility. One day, at Fontainebleau, in the same exciting year, the Dauphin was amusing himself by reciting to her a long list of strangely-named places in the forest. 'Mon Dieu, Monseigneur,' exclaimed the princess, 'what a memory you have! And what a pity that it is only burdened with such trifles!'

But, if the Dauphin was poor company, he was a useful pawn. The object of the cabal was to destroy the influence of the eldest son, the Duc de Bourgogne, with his father, and to parry the fascinations of the Duchesse de Bourgogne. The plan was only too successfully carried out. The character of the duke was of a kind that did not appeal to Monseigneur. Abstemious, almost ascetic, intelligent, and widely read, he was singularly out of place amid the somewhat primitive pleasures of Meudon; and the humility and filial respect in which he was never wanting could not conceal the superiority of his character. Probably, too, the exceptional favour which the Duchesse de Bourgogne enjoyed with the king and Madame de Maintenon, and the hopes which the world was beginning to build on the high character and active mind of her husband, stirred some secret chord of jealousy in the heart of the lethargic Dauphin. He was easily prejudiced and easily led, and the cabal at Meudon took infinite pains to widen the incipient breach. The Duc de Berry was pushed forward at the expense of his elder brother, and, though no intrigues availed to break down the affection which subsisted between the two princes, they succeeded in alienating the Duc de Berry from his sister-in-law, and in poisoning the mind of the father; and it became evident that, if Monseigneur survived Louis XIV, the Duc and Duchesse de Bourgogne would be without influence or credit in the new reign.

Things were in this unhappy state when the death of the Dauphin scattered the *Parvulo* of Meudon and put an end to their sinister intrigues.

On the Wednesday in Easter week, April 8, 1711, Monseigneur had left Versailles for Meudon, taking with him the Duchess of Burgundy. On the way, at Chaville, they met a priest carrying the sacrament to a sick person, and, like good Catholics, knelt down to adore. On rising they questioned the priest, and learned that the sacrament was being taken to a man with small-pox. The Dauphin was supposed to have had the malady in childhood, but in so mild a form that doubts remained as to the correctness of the diagnosis, and he himself had always been peculiarly apprehensive of falling a victim to the disease. He was much impressed by the incident of the journey, and said in the evening to Boudin, his chief physician, that he should not be surprised if he had got small-pox himself. On the following morning, the 9th, he rose as usual, intending to hunt the wolf; but, as he was dressing, he was seized with a sudden feeling of weakness, and fell back on to his chair. Boudin put him to bed, and the state of his pulse gave cause for considerable alarm. The king was informed by Fagon of what had happened, but, as the doctor expressed no anxiety, he concluded that the malady was a trifling one and drove in the afternoon from Versailles to Marly. The Duke and Duchess of Burgundy, however, came over to Meudon and spent the day in the sick chamber there, only leaving it at nightfall to be present at the king's supper. On the following morning, the king, who had been frightened by the account they gave of the patient, set off for Meudon in person, intending to stay there so long as Monseigneur's illness lasted, whatever its nature might be. At the same time, as a measure of precaution, he forbade the Ducs de Bourgogne and de Berry, and their wives, to accompany

him, and decided that only those members of the Court who had already had small-pox should be allowed to pay their respects to him at Meudon, if they desired to do so; for there was to be no compulsion. Mme. la Duchesse, together with the Princesse de Conti, Mlle. de Lislebonne, and Mme. d'Espinoy, were already at Meudon and were allowed to remain there as nurses. They took their meals with the king, who was shortly joined by Madame de Maintenon.

The disease soon declared itself unmistakably as small-pox; but, though it was necessarily serious in a man of fifty, the doctors gave repeated assurances that all was going on as well as possible. The king, who was lodged immediately above his son, saw him several times a day, worked with his ministers, held the usual councils, and drove for a few hours on the afternoon of the 13th to Marly, where he saw the Duchess of Burgundy. He had not seen Mlle. Choin, himself, but was under the impression that Madame de Maintenon had done so. The latter, however, had contented herself with sending polite excuses and expressing a hope that they would soon meet. Mlle. Choin was frequently by the bedside of Monseigneur, but never at the same time as the king; Madame de Maintenon hardly budged from her own apartment.

On Tuesday, April 14, it was generally supposed that Monseigneur was out of danger, and the faithful herring-women of the Halles sent a deputation of two to make inquiries. The envoys were admitted to the sick chamber, expressed their joy at the Dauphin's recovery, and announced that they were going to have a 'Te Deum' sung in Paris to celebrate the event. 'It is not time yet, my poor girls,' said Monseigneur, who had, from the first, taken a serious view of his own condition. As the afternoon wore on the illness began to take a wrong turn. The head and face became extremely swollen and the

features almost unrecognisable, and the patient had fits of drowsiness in which he failed to recognise the Princesse de Conti. As night fell the symptoms became increasingly alarming, and Boudin proposed to Fagon that they should call in another opinion from Paris—a suggestion which Fagon indignantly scouted. Fagon, indeed, remained so obstinately optimistic that the king was left in complete ignorance of the impending crisis; he had been pained and frightened by the appearance of the Dauphin in the afternoon, even to the extent of shedding tears, but had been completely reassured by the official bulletins, and he sat down to his supper without any feeling of special anxiety. Meanwhile, in the sick chamber, the doctors were applying the *grands remèdes* without effect, and a general panic was spreading among the attendants and spectators, of whom the room was always full. The curé of Meudon, who was in the habit of calling for news every evening, found the doors all open and the valets in confusion. He entered the bedroom, and, grasping the situation, advanced unchecked to the bedside, seized the prince's hand, and spoke to him of God. The Dauphin was still conscious, though almost incapable of speech; he stammered out a sort of confession, received absolution, and almost immediately afterwards relapsed into unconsciousness.

At 11 P.M. the agony began. Then, and not till then, the king was informed that Monseigneur was dying. Hastily rising from the table, he rushed downstairs. The Princesse de Conti met him in the ante-chamber and persuaded him not to enter the bedroom, where Père le Tellier, the king's confessor, who had been summoned in addition to the curé, was vainly trying to rouse the dying man. Louis, overwhelmed by the suddenness of the calamity, sat down in a dazed condition on a sofa, where he was almost immediately joined by Madame de

Maintenon; and, together, they waited for the end. At 11.30 Fagon came out to tell them that all was over. The carriages had been ordered some time before, and on receiving the fatal news the king, still dry-eyed and dazed, rose to go. On his way through the Court his progress was impeded by the officers and dependents of Monseigneur, who threw themselves at his feet with strange cries and besought him to have pity on them, as they had lost their place and would die of hunger. The king took no notice of this painful and unseemly demonstration, but, seeing Pontchartrain, he told him to be present on the morrow at Marly for the usual council meeting. The first carriage that presented itself happened to be Monseigneur's *berline*; the king summoned another, and, entering it, drove off to Marly with Madame de Maintenon and his two daughters, the Princesse de Conti and Mme. la Duchesse, the latter of whom kept uttering piercing screams.

At Marly, where this sudden return had not been expected, everything was in confusion. There were no candles, and the keys of the various rooms had been mislaid. The king waited for more than an hour in one of the ante-chambers, seated in a corner between Madame de Maintenon and the two princesses, and weeping freely. Such of the courtiers as had been able to follow showed their bad taste and their desire to be noticed by crowding into the room. At last the key of Madame de Maintenon's bedroom was discovered, and the king was released from this ill-timed importunity. He stayed with his wife for an hour, and went to bed at about 4 A.M.

Meanwhile, at Meudon, there had been a general *sauve qui peut*. Mlle. Choin, who had been forgotten in her attic, was first made aware of her loss by the cries which filled the air. As soon as the king had gone, her two friends, Mlles. de Lislebonne and de Melun, put her into

a carriage and drove with her to Paris. The rest of the courtiers made off as best they could, some in carriages, some on foot. The servants spent the night wandering in the gardens or seeking shelter in the outhouses, and, within an hour of the king's departure, the Château was practically deserted. Only La Vallière and one or two valets, together with some Capuchin monks, remained to watch the corpse. But, in spite of open doors and windows, the state of the body was such that the watchers were compelled to withdraw to the terrace on to which the Dauphin's apartments opened, and the poor remains were hastily coffined on the following day without the embalming which was customary in the case of royalty.

If a stranger had come to Meudon that night, he would have witnessed a scene not easily forgotten. The extensive gardens, fragrant with bursting buds and all the promise of spring, were haunted by dim shapes that flitted aimlessly to and fro, from avenue to avenue and from *bosquet* to *bosquet*; but the Château itself was plunged in utter silence and darkness, save for one room on the ground floor, where tall candles, placed in a row on either side of the bed, flickered in the draught and shot their uncertain rays into the night through the open windows. Outside this room, half in the light and half in the shadow, a small group of men was kneeling on the terrace, speaking in whispers or muttering prayers, while inside lay the disfigured corpse of the man who, only a few hours before, had been heir to the crown of France, the object of flattery and homage, and the centre of hopes, ambitions and intrigues.

The news that Monseigneur was *in extremis* reached Versailles late on the Tuesday evening, when the Court was preparing itself for sleep. It fell like a thunderbolt, for all the reports received that day had been favourable and the patient was considered practically out of

danger. The death of a Dauphin was a catastrophe which called for unusual expressions of grief, and Versailles rose to the occasion. The rumour spread from mouth to mouth and from room to room, and soon every man and woman in the palace was on foot and moving towards the state apartments of the late queen, where, in a small chamber behind the bedroom, the protagonists in the drama, the Ducs de Bourgogne and de Berry, with their wives, had come together, stunned by the suddenness of the blow. In the outer rooms the lackeys and footmen, 'desperate at the loss of a master who seemed to have been expressly created for them,'[1] kept up one long, continuous moan. Further on, the main body of courtiers moved aimlessly about, 'sighing discreetly, praising the deceased Dauphin in broken phrases, and watching the faces of friends and foes in the hope of penetrating their secret thoughts.' In the inner sanctum, and seated on the same sofa, the Duke and Duchess of Burgundy were crying quietly together; beside them the Duc de Berry, a warm-hearted and impulsive youth who had loved his father dearly, was sobbing, or, as Saint-Simon puts it, 'roaring' so convulsively that the contagion of his grief spread to others and they burst into similar hysterical tears. 'His wife, roused by his cries from her sombre thoughts, would support him, embrace him, or offer him her smelling salts. Her own grief, though less disinterested, was equally acute. She had plotted long and laboriously to undermine the influence of the Duc and Duchesse de Bourgogne at Meudon, and the sudden shattering of her dreams of future ascendency filled her with rage and despair. Long spells of gloomy silence, broken by torrents of tears and by convulsive gestures, bore witness to the violence of her agitation. With good reason she felt herself on the edge of a precipice.'[2]

[1] Saint-Simon. [2] Ibid.

Into the midst of this scene of woe Madame, whose most respectable emotions seldom failed to provoke a smile, introduced a note of comedy. With characteristic reverence for etiquette, she had stayed to array herself in full court dress. 'She now came in howling, without exactly knowing why, flooded them all with her tears, embraced them, made the palace re-echo with her cries, and furnished the strange spectacle of a princess who dons the garb of ceremony to weep with a crowd of ladies who are all in the *déshabillé* of the bedroom.'[1]

Grief, like joy, is infectious. Even the Duc d'Orléans, the future *roué* Regent, whose relations with the deceased Dauphin had latterly been more than strained, was swept off his feet. Saint-Simon found him weeping in his private *cabinet*, and expressed his surprise. 'I am surprised myself,' replied the duke, 'but the spectacle is a touching one. . . . I know that my grief won't last long, and that, in a few days, it will be blunted by the recollection of our quarrel; but at present the ties of blood, relationship, and humanity, all touch me, and my bowels are moved'; and, so saying, he went into a corner, put his head between his hands, and sobbed audibly.

The Duchess of Orleans, his wife, had a strange and comic experience that night. She had withdrawn, with Mme. de Castries and a few other ladies, from the inner sanctum, where the princes were indulging their grief, to a neighbouring *salon* which was comparatively quiet. In this *salon*, as in the adjoining gallery, it was customary for some of the Suisses and floor-polishers to sleep; and at a certain hour movable beds, provided with the regulation curtains, were brought in for their use. The duchess and her ladies had seated themselves close to one of these beds, and were discussing the many interesting problems which the Dauphin's death had raised, when Mme. de

[1] Saint-Simon.

Castries, who was leaning against the bed and had felt it moving, uttered a sudden cry, for she was of a nervous temperament. A moment afterwards a great bare arm lifted the curtains and revealed the astonished face of a Suisse, who had retired to his rest before the bad news reached Versailles, and who had slept tranquilly through the confusion. Half awake and half asleep, he eyed the company for a few moments with solemn surprise, and then, thinking probably that he was dreaming, dropped the curtains and turned over to continue his sleep.

At last the Duc de Beauvillier, who had been a silent spectator of this scene of royal sorrow, decided that the time had come to end it. The Duc de Berry, who had already been undressed where he sat, was persuaded to withdraw, and retired with his wife to the latter's room, where they spent the remainder of the night in so hysterical a state that their doctors thought it necessary to sit up with them. The Duchess of Burgundy's bedroom was cleared of the invading mob, and she and her husband went to bed. Even then, custom and prudence required that their sorrow should be in some sort public; so the curtains of the bed were left open, and several of the maids of honour slept on sofas in the room. When all further need for a public demonstration of their despair had been thus removed, courtiers and lackeys betook themselves to a well-earned repose, and soon the great palace at Versailles was wrapped in the silence of night.

Mlle. Choin, as has been already said, had driven off to Paris. There she was soon able to test the value of Court friendships. She had a pet dog, whose favourite food was rabbit heads. In the days of her prosperity her neighbour, the Maréchal d'Huxelles, had been in the habit of providing the dog constantly with this delicacy, and of paying frequent visits to the mistress. With the death of Monseigneur rabbit heads and visits stopped abruptly.

Other friends also fell off; but Madame la Duchesse, Mlle. de Lislebonne, and Mme. d'Espinoy remained faithful. The king assured the widow of his protection and granted her a pension of 12,000 francs, and the Duke and Duchess of Burgundy both wrote letters of condolence. For ten or twelve years Mlle. Choin continued to lead in Paris the same quiet and unostentatious life that she had enjoyed at the height of her fortune, and in 1723 she died, carrying her secret with her to the grave.

Owing to the infectious state of the body, the funeral of Monseigneur was shorn of all the customary pomp, and the leaden coffin was placed simply in one of the royal coaches, the glass of the front windows being first removed to secure the necessary room. The Dauphin had died between 11.30 and midnight on Tuesday, April 15. At seven o'clock on the evening of the following Thursday the funeral *cortège* started from the Château, accompanied by the curé of Meudon, the Duc de la Tremoïlle, first gentleman of the chamber, the Bishop of Metz, chief almoner, some footmen, and twenty-four pages of the king carrying torches. At Saint-Denis the body was lowered at once into the royal vault without ceremony.

On Monday, April 20, the king, who had wisely kept himself and all who had been present during the illness in quarantine, received the official visit of condolence from the Court at Marly. There were the usual squabbles about precedence and the usual scheming to secure a recognition of disputed claims. Some people thrust themselves in front of their superiors, others wore garments to which they had no right. The Rohans advanced in single file, in order of seniority, till some malicious courtiers wedged themselves into the column and spoiled the effect of this family procession. The king, standing by the table of his room, in ordinary dress and with his hat

under his arm, watched the long stream of mourners as they filed past him, returned the salutes of the most distinguished, and could scarcely restrain a smile at the grotesque appearance and awkward movements of some ambitious nobodies who were ill at ease in their heavy and unaccustomed garments.

When this long ceremony was over, the other royalties who claimed to be visited withdrew to their own rooms to receive their due. Mme. la Princesse posted herself adroitly in the exit from Mme. la Duchesse's apartment and trapped some of the more thoughtless of the retreating guests into paying her an honour to which she was not entitled—to her own exceeding satisfaction and the bitter mortification of her dupes.

And, when it was all over, Monseigneur was forgotten; except by a few who had hoped to use him as a stepping-stone to power, or who had discerned, or thought they had discerned, beneath his dull and indolent exterior the rudiments of an intelligence and the beatings of a human heart.

CHAPTER XI

THE DUKE AND DUCHESS OF BURGUNDY

The Duke as a child—His education—Fénelon—Marriage—Marie-Adelaide de Savoie—Her flirtations—Oudenarde—The Cabal of Meudon—Disgrace of Vendôme—The new Dauphin and Dauphine—Their deaths in 1712—The 'might-have-beens.'

QUITE apart from the tragic interest which attaches to his early death the Duc de Bourgogne stands out as one of the most striking and fascinating personalities of his time. The short and rather frail figure, with the long oval face, the thoughtful eyes and the unruly brown hair, challenges attention wherever it appears on the canvases that line the walls of Versailles. There is a look of distinction on the features, a suggestion of fire as well as depth, which stimulate interest and enlist the human sympathies; it seems almost possible to read in the face traces of that painful struggle by which the soul gained the mastery over the flesh, and which has stamped a naturally vivacious expression with a cast of seriousness that almost amounts to melancholy.

Louis, Duc de Bourgogne, who was born on August 6, 1682, was, both morally and intellectually, the most gifted of the Bourbons; one of those small men, with puny bodies and lofty minds, who, like William III, have made history. Had he lived to wear the crown and shape the destinies of his country, it is impossible to doubt that

the history of France would have been profoundly altered. People so different as Madame and Madame de Maintenon regarded him as a saint; and thoughtful men like Saint-Simon, who cared more for politics than religion, looked to his keen and exhaustive intelligence as the one force that could stay the ruin of France. His premature death, just when he seemed on the threshold of his life's work, is one of the tragedies of history.

Nevertheless, there was little in his early childhood to excite enthusiasm, and there was even a time when his disappearance from the scene would have been hailed by many as an unqualified blessing. Few children born to power have given juster cause for anxiety and alarm. With an abnormally passionate nature and a consuming pride, the Duc de Bourgogne inherited in an unusual degree the animal propensities of his race. This is how Saint-Simon, the friend and admirer of the man, described the character of the boy: 'He was born terrible, and his early youth made everyone tremble; hard and passionate, even against inanimate objects . . . incapable of enduring the least opposition, even from the elements, without flying into a passion which almost tore his body to pieces; excessively obstinate, and sensual in an abnormal degree. He was equally fond of wine and good cheer; passionately fond of hunting, and music, which threw him into a sort of ecstasy; he was also devoted to cards, at which he could not endure to lose, so that it was dangerous to play with him. In a word, he was the prey of every passion and the sport of every pleasure; often savage and naturally cruel; unfeeling in his jests and sallies, which were so pointed as to be overwhelming. He looked down from the clouds on other men, whom he regarded as mere atoms with whom he had nothing in common. Even his brothers, though he had been brought up with them on a footing of perfect equality, barely seemed to him to hold

the position of intermediaries between himself and the human race.' And, as an instance of his passionate nature, the same author mentions that 'he would break the clocks when they struck the hour that called him to some uncongenial task, and fly into a mad temper when the rain interfered with a cherished plan.' Probably Saint-Simon paints in unnecessarily dark colours by way of heightening the subsequent contrast, but there can be no doubt that the childhood of the Duc de Bourgogne seemed to foreshadow a Caligula or a Nero rather than a St. Louis. The change which transformed the arrogant, passionate, and sensual boy into the humble, patient, and almost ascetic man is a signal proof of the value of education, or rather an instance of the amazing influence which a really good man or woman can exercise over the heart of childhood; and the triumph, humanly speaking, is the triumph of Fénelon.

At the age of seven the Duc de Bourgogne was taken out of the hands of the women, with whom his faults had been allowed to grow unchecked, and placed under the charge of a *gouverneur* and a tutor. It is to the eternal credit of Louis XIV that, when he had to provide for the education of his family, he brushed aside all personal prejudices and selfish interests, and looked to merit alone as the guiding principle of his choice. To his son he had given Montausier and Bossuet; in the case of his grandson he did even better, and his choice fell upon Beauvillier and Fénelon.

The Abbé de Fénelon was one of those rare characters who combine with great intellectual gifts a sincerely Christlike spirit. Wise, tolerant, and gentle, his sympathies flowed out to all, but especially to children; and his influence over his pupil was all the more unrestricted because the Duc de Beauvillier, though officially his superior, was in reality his disciple, and the two saw eye

to eye. The problem with which they were confronted was no easy one, and the exact proportions of gentleness and firmness necessary for its solution were hard to determine. But the boy had two qualities which Fénelon was quick to divine, and which he made the lever of reform. In the first place, like most passionate children, the Duc de Bourgogne was capable of deep affections, and his trust, once gained, was not easily forfeited. And, in the second place, he was endowed with a keen intelligence, a real thirst for knowledge, and a quickness of perception which, rightly trained, could not fail to be a powerful ally of the soul in its war against the flesh. Not only could he see and appreciate the essential beauty of goodness and the degradation of vice, but he could also receive and profit by an indirect rebuke which, given directly, would have proved too severe a strain on his passionate temperament. La Fontaine was called in to illustrate by his inimitable fables some of the most obvious faults of the young prince, and Fénelon himself followed the same method in the themes which he set his pupil; and the pleasure which the boy felt at discovering for himself the point of these fables lessened the mortification of the rebuke. Sometimes the object lesson was acted rather than spoken. One day a workman was engaged in effecting some repairs in the prince's room, and the boy, with the inquisitiveness of childhood, began to examine his tools. Thereupon the workman, who had been coached in his part by Fénelon, pretended to fly into a violent passion. 'Off with you!' he cried, with threatening gestures. 'If people come interfering with me I lose my temper and break every bone in their bodies.' The child, smarting under the outrage, rushed off to his tutor and demanded that the insolent man should be punished. Whereupon Fénelon remarked quietly: 'He's a good workman and his only fault is his temper. I am sincerely

sorry for him and think that he deserves pity rather than punishment.'

Unlike his father, the Duc de Bourgogne never had to submit to corporal punishment. His was one of those fiery natures that must be coaxed, not beaten, into self-discipline. Moreover, Fénelon did not believe in the rod. When sterner measures than a reprimand were necessary, the culprit was condemned to a sort of solitary confinement. He ate alone; his books were taken away as useless for one who had not known how to profit by them; the servants were forbidden to answer his questions; and everyone who approached him treated him with mingled pity and repugnance, as a poor half-witted creature. With most boys such a punishment would have been barren of results; there are some who would even have enjoyed it as a holiday. But to the proud and sensitive nature of the little duke it was a severe trial, and never failed to bring about the necessary repentance. When the culprit had admitted his fault, the promises of reform were committed to writing. 'I promise M. l'Abbé de Fénelon,' wrote the child on one such occasion, 'on the word of a prince, to do at once what he tells me, and to obey him the moment he forbids me anything; and if I break my word I will submit to any kind of punishment and disgrace. Written at Versailles, the 27th of November 1689.—Louis.'

By these and similar devices Fénelon, like a wise teacher, enlisted on the right side all the natural qualities of his pupil which were capable of being turned to account; but for the transformation of this strangely diversified character he relied mainly on a wholly different force, the power of religion. Religion to Fénelon meant, not merely external observances and a sound theology, but the Sermon on the Mount applied to daily conduct. How successful he was in inspiring his pupil with the spirit of

his creed the subsequent life of the Duc de Bourgogne was destined to show. But the victory was not won in a day, and it needed infinite patience and tact, and, above all, an unfailing sympathy, to wean the arrogant child from his grosser faults. His first Communion marked a real epoch in his life. 'Ever since his first Communion,' said Madame de Maintenon in 1704, 'we have seen all the faults, which in his childhood gave us such fears for the future, gradually disappear. His goodness has gone on steadily increasing, and he has lived down nobly all the jests which were at first levelled against him. . . . What specially marks the solid character of his piety is the violence which he has to do to his nature in order to master his faults, and he has to hold himself in with all his might in order not to give way to his passions. But religion has so changed him that, from being violent and hot-headed, he has become gentle, calm, and sweet-tempered, and he keeps such a hold over himself that it is difficult to detect any traces of his original character.'

If the young prince was surrounded by an atmosphere of sympathy and affection, his daily life was almost Spartan in its simplicity. Together with his two brothers, he was brought up in the south wing of the palace at Versailles. The young princes were allowed occasionally to listen to the music at *appartement*, but otherwise they were rigorously kept away from all Court ceremonies and entertainments. Their day began at 7.45 A.M., winter and summer alike. At 8.15 they heard Mass. Then followed a short visit to the king and the Dauphin; after which they had lessons from ten till twelve. At noon they dined. There was another lesson in the afternoon, from three to five in summer, or from five to seven in winter; they took supper at 7.45 P.M., and went to bed at 9 P.M.; and this routine was not broken by any holiday. They were always allowed to satisfy their hunger, but their food was

of the simplest. Strong wine and all delicacies were forbidden. Breakfast consisted of bread and water; dinner, of beef or chicken, with water or a little *vin ordinaire*. In the afternoon they were given a crust of bread; and supper resembled dinner. Every day their bodies were hardened by physical exercise. Trifling ailments, such as colds or coughs, were ignored, and, whether the day were wet or fine, they were accustomed to walk out of doors bare-headed.[1] It will be noticed that comparatively few hours in the day were devoted to study. With a mind so precocious as that of the Duc de Bourgogne, who had to be held back rather than pushed on, the easy hours were a gain. Even these lessons were frequently interrupted, for it was Fénelon's habit, whenever any interesting question arose, to drop the immediate subject of study and follow his pupil into by-paths. To stimulate interest, rather than to cram, was the principle of his teaching. Nevertheless, so rapid was the prince's progress that at eleven he had read and enjoyed Virgil, Homer, Horace, Livy, and part of Tacitus, and knew the geography of France 'as well as he knew the Park of Versailles.' He was not allowed to learn any musical instrument (though he afterwards taught himself to play on the clavecin) lest he should find the pursuit too absorbing; and he was similarly checked in his study of science and mathematics, though, afterwards, when he became his own master, he corrected the omission. At thirteen he had begun philosophy, and at twenty he wrote, 'Nothing pleases me so much as metaphysics and ethics.' By that time he was also deeply read in theology. He had, indeed, a real passion for knowledge and a quick but

[1] At an early age the Duc de Bourgogne showed signs of a slight curvature of the spine, which, to a certain extent, disfigured him for life, and he was condemned to wear an iron apparatus in the shape of a cross, which was intended to straighten the spinal column, but which tortured without curing.

patient mind, and, to the day of his death, he was still learning.

In 1695 the daily intercourse between tutor and pupil was interrupted, for Fénelon was raised to the Archbishopric of Cambrai, and, though he still continued to direct the studies of the prince, the new prelate was kept in his diocese for the greater part of the year by his official duties. Two years later the separation became complete. His '*Maximes des Saints*,' his '*Télémaque*' (in which Louis XIV found the condemnation of his own policy), and, above all, his relations with Mme. Guyon, had cost Fénelon the king's confidence, and on August 1, 1697, he received an order to withdraw to Cambrai and to confine himself to his diocese. For the rest of his life he was in disgrace.

The Duc de Bourgogne was then barely fifteen, an age at which most boys find it very easy to forget. It says much for the extraordinary hold which Fénelon had acquired over his pupil that neither time, disgrace, nor separation, could weaken the influence which he exercised. He had indeed tapped those springs of early affection which a child is wont to bestow on its parents, but which Monseigneur either could not or would not discover in his son. The relations between tutor and pupil were almost those of father and child, and absence strengthened rather than weakened the bonds.

Louis XIV had not only dismissed from the prince's service all the officers, with the exception of Beauvillier, who had enjoyed Fénelon's special confidence, but had forbidden all communication between the ex-tutor and his former pupil. However in 1701 the Duc de Bourgogne managed to bridge the gulf. 'At last, my dear Archbishop,' he wrote, 'I have an opportunity of breaking the silence of four years. I have suffered many things in that time, but the hardest of all has been that I could

not tell you what I felt for you, and that my affection for you was being strengthened and not chilled by your misfortunes. . . . I shall not tell you how indignant I am at all that has been done to you. Don't show this letter to anybody except the Abbé de Langeron, if he is actually at Cambrai, for I am sure of his secrecy. . . . Don't reply to it either, unless you can find some very safe way. . . . Good-bye, my dear Archbishop. I embrace you with all my heart. It will probably be a long time before I can write to you again. I ask for your prayers and your blessing.'

But if, in view of the king's prohibition, direct correspondence was dangerous, there were other channels of communication; and the Duc de Chevreuse, brother-in-law and *alter ego* of the Duc de Beauvillier, served as the intermediary. Through him, the Archbishop in his exile at Cambrai directed the life and studies of his former pupil quite as effectively and authoritatively as he had done in the days of his favour at Versailles. And the secret was an open one.

After the final separation the Duc de Bourgogne only set eyes on his beloved master three times (and then only for a moment) on his way to or from the army in Flanders, and under restrictions which made private talk impossible. Saint-Simon has left us an account of one of these meetings. In 1708 the prince was passing through Cambrai on his way to the fatal campaign of Oudenarde, and the Archbishop, together with a large crowd, had gone to the posting-house to meet him. The transport of joy with which the young prince greeted the tutor was too obvious to escape notice. 'He embraced him tenderly several times, and said aloud that he would never forget how much he owed him; and, though he said nothing that could not be heard by all, he hardly spoke to anybody else; and the intensity of the gaze which he fixed on the

Archbishop, coupled with his first words, had an eloquence which thrilled all the spectators and more than made up for those private marks of affection which the king had forbidden.'

In 1697, when he was fifteen years old, the Duc de Bourgogne came under the other decisive influence of his life; for on December 7 of that year he was married to Marie-Adelaïde, the twelve-year-old daughter of the Duke of Savoy. The match was political, and the husband had little or no voice in the selection of his bride; but, if he had enjoyed the unfettered choice of a private individual, the Duc de Bourgogne could not have done better. From the day of his marriage to the day of her death he was deeply, almost madly, in love with his wife. The princess had been brought to France in the autumn of 1696 to be trained for her future high position. Self-possessed, but frank and affectionate, she had won all hearts from the moment of her arrival. The king, who had gone to Montargis to meet her, described his first impressions in a letter to Madame de Maintenon: 'She has the most graceful and perfect figure that I have ever seen; her dress and hair are like a picture; her eyes bright and very handsome, with admirable dark eyelashes; her complexion smooth, and as pink and white as heart could wish; and she has the most beautiful brown hair that you can imagine, and in great quantity; her mouth is red, her lips large, her teeth white, long, and very irregular; her hands are well shaped, but of the colour of her age. I am extremely pleased with her, and I hope you will be so too when you see her.'

Madame de Maintenon, who was naturally fond of children, was not likely to be impervious to the charms of this winning girl who called her '*ma tante*' at their very first meeting and treated her with mingled affection and respect. 'Your Royal Highness,' she wrote to the Duchess

of Savoy, 'will hardly believe how pleased the king is. Yesterday he did me the honour to say that he will have to be careful in what he says or people will think that he is exaggerating. . . . She has a natural courtesy which makes it impossible for her to say anything unkind. Yesterday I tried to resist her caresses, saying that I was too old, to which she replied, "*Ah! point si vieille!*" She came up to me, when the king had left the room, and kissed me. Then she made me sit down, having noticed at once that I cannot stand, and, almost seating herself on my lap, she said in a coaxing voice, "Mamma told me to give you a thousand messages from her, and to ask for your friendship for myself. Please tell me what I must do to please you." Those are the words, Madame; but the gaiety, the gentleness and grace, with which they were accompanied, cannot be put on to paper.'

A few suspicious souls, such as Madame the Princess Palatine and Saint-Simon, saw in this childish grace a piece of consummate acting, the result of clever training and of a precocious talent for diplomacy. But, in reality, the little princess's only art consisted in being artless. Saint-Simon himself gives the key to her success when he says: 'She was kind to everybody, even to the least influential and the most unimportant, without any appearance of conscious effort. One was tempted to think her wholly devoted to the people with whom she happened to be for the moment.' Young, active, high-spirited, light and graceful as a nymph, she was the life and soul of *fêtes*, spectacles, and dances, and seemed to be in half a dozen places at once, imparting gaiety and movement wherever she went. And with this lively and affectionate disposition, full of the joy of life and wholly free from malice, she combined the rare gift of being absolutely spontaneous and natural. Is it surprising that in the most malicious and artificial Court in Europe she became a universal

favourite, the idol of young and old? A bust by Coysevox, in the bedroom of Louis XIV (a replica of the full-length statue in the Louvre) gives us some idea of the woman who exercised so powerful a charm over her contemporaries. The face is almost boyish in its frankness and vivacity, and the expression, without being exactly handsome, is singularly attractive. A portrait by Santerre in the *Salle des Gardes de la Reine* gives to the same features an air of greater dignity.

Of the king, the young princess made an easy conquest. She was, perhaps, the only person in France who was not afraid of him; and Louis, beneath all his starch, had a human heart that craved affection. To be petted, teased, coaxed, and even scolded, was for him a new and delightful experience; for his own children had been brought up in such awe of him that he knew nothing of the natural expansiveness of childhood. There was nothing that the princess did not dare. She would hover round him when he was busy, fling her arms round his neck, jump on to his knees, rummage among his papers, read his letters, and interrupt the most serious conversation with her sallies. One day the king and Madame de Maintenon were discussing Queen Anne and the English Court. '*Ma tante*,' said the irrepressible princess, 'one must admit that in England the queens govern better than the kings: and do you know why, *ma tante*?' she continued, dancing about the room. 'The reason is that, where there are kings, women govern; and where there are queens, men.' 'The strange thing is,' says Saint-Simon, 'that they both laughed and admitted that she was right.'

To Madame de Maintenon the affection of this warm-hearted but irresponsible girl came as a ray of sunshine. If she was ill the Duchesse de Bourgogne nursed her. 'Our dear princess,' she wrote in 1704, when a heavy cold had

kept her to her bed, 'has been dining with me and showing me all the care that a good daughter could show to a dearly-loved mother.' When there were confidences to be imparted or troubles to be shared, it was to Madame de Maintenon that the princess came at all hours of the day or night. But the affection of the elder lady was not untinged with anxiety. She had the good sense to see that a character so full of spirit and vitality as that of the Duchesse de Bourgogne required exceptional treatment, and that the girl must have her fill of pleasure; but, in Madame de Maintenon's gloomy philosophy of life, pleasure ranked as a dangerous and unworthy thing; she tolerated what she could not prevent, but she would have liked the future queen to be less frivolous. 'Our princess,' she wrote in 1706, 'would be perfect if it weren't for *lansquenet*.' Sometimes she even tried to persuade herself that the girl did not really enjoy life, but only pretended to. 'Our princess does her best to amuse herself, but only succeeds in tiring and dazing herself. Yesterday she went to dinner at Meudon with twenty-four ladies; they were to go to the fair afterwards to see some celebrated tight-rope dancers; then they were to return to Meudon for supper, and doubtless they will have played cards till day-break.' And again she writes: 'Unless I am very much mistaken, the Duchess of Burgundy will be unhappy all her life. She has a sensitiveness, a self-respect, and a refinement of feeling, which are quite out of place in this country;' and yet again: 'Our princess tries to forget her cares; she walks, runs, rides, and drives, but her anxieties pursue her everywhere.' To be unhappy was, with Madame de Maintenon, a conspicuous sign of grace; but, though the princess had her troubles at times and tried to drown them in dance and song, there can be no doubt that she found life, not a vale of tears, but a land of enchantment; and, but for the vigilant eye which *la tante*

kept upon her movements, her feet might easily have strayed after forbidden pleasures.

Even as it was, she did not always avoid scrapes. Cards and gambling exercised a fatal fascination over her, and, as they were not a passport to the good opinion of the king or of Madame de Maintenon, the duchess often concealed her exploits from them so far as she was able. On one occasion an apparently innocent hunting luncheon had been converted into a card party, at which Madame la Duchesse and some not very reputable gentlemen had been present. The secret leaked out, and Madame de Maintenon, realising what loss of prestige and reputation might easily ensue from such escapades, was much troubled. 'The king,' she wrote to Mme. de Dangeau, 'told me yesterday that he had been surprised to find the card-players at La Bretesche; so I knew that the Duchesse de Bourgogne had been telling me stories. . . . The king said, "Wasn't a dinner, a ride, a hunt, and a picnic enough for one day?" Then he added, after thinking for a little, "I think I ought to tell these gentlemen that they do not pay their court to me in an acceptable way by playing cards with the Duchesse de Bourgogne." I said that I had always been afraid that her passion for *lansquenet* would lead her into some equivocal position which would do her harm. We then talked of other things, but the king harked back to the original subject. "Oughtn't I to speak to these gentlemen?" he said. I replied that, in my opinion, such a step would damage the Duchesse de Bourgogne, and that it would be better for him to speak to *her* and to keep the matter a secret. He told me that he would do so to-day. So here we are within sight of the quarrel which I have always dreaded. The king will think that he has wounded her by forbidding her *lansquenet*, and will be more distant to her; and it is true that she will be angry and more cold to him. . . .'

But Madame de Maintenon's worst apprehensions were not realised; for, if the princess was thoughtless, she was loyal in her affections. Here is a fragment of the letter which she wrote to *la tante* on the occasion:

'I am in despair, *ma chère tante*, at always doing stupid things and giving you cause for finding fault with me. I am firmly determined to turn over a new leaf and not to play this wretched game again, which only damages my reputation and lessens your affection, which I value more than anything. I beg you, *ma chère tante*, not to speak to me about it, if I keep my good resolution. If I fail, were it only once, I shall be delighted for the king to forbid me the game, and I will endure all the humiliation that such a step would cause me. . . . I am overwhelmed by all your kindness and by your sending me the money to help me in paying off my debts. . . . I am miserable at having displeased you. I have abandoned God and He has abandoned me. I trust that, with His help, which I ask of Him with all my heart, I shall get the better of all my faults.' A very charming letter, which shows both the ladies in a most pleasing light.

But Madame de Maintenon had another cause for anxiety, deeper and more permanent than anything which could arise out of cards. The Duchesse de Bourgogne did not return the passionate affection of her husband; she tolerated it, but she could not pay it back in kind. In the eyes of the world they were a devoted couple; but the shrewd old lady could see below the surface. Respect, rather than love, was the feeling which the duchess entertained for her husband; and, at one time, respect was almost changed into contempt. The growing austerity of the prince, who kept, so far as he could, aloof from the pleasures of the Court; who had abjured cards, given up the theatre and music, and sold his jewels for the benefit of the poor, and who refused to be present at a ball

on the feast of the Epiphany, was not likely to appeal to the light-hearted Marie-Adelaïde who had no leanings towards asceticism and found the world, as it existed, very good. She rallied her husband publicly on his piety, or played practical jokes on him, whose object was to place him in compromising positions; and Madame de Maintenon lived for a while in daily terror lest the young wife's indiscretion should reveal too clearly to a gossiping and intriguing Court that there was more of pity than love in her feelings towards her consort, and even more of scorn than of pity.

And she did even worse than merely mock at her ascetic husband; she entered upon the dangerous path of flirtation. Young, attractive, and brilliant, it was only human that she should wish to weave a little romance into her life and crystallise the admiration which she read in all men's eyes but which they dared not utter with their lips. There is no reason to suppose that she ever stepped beyond the bounds of modesty. Her fault, if fault it was, was only the natural vanity of a charming princess, who desired to hear from the lips of a favoured few the homage which would have been freely expressed if her station had been less exalted. But what might have been pardonable in a private individual was dangerous in a future queen, and the fright in which the experiment ended probably taught the duchess a useful lesson.

Like others of her sex who have started on the career of conquest, she had two strings to her bow: Nangis, good-looking, polished, and brainless, a ladies' man of the approved Court pattern; and Maulevrier, nephew of Colbert, ugly, but able and extremely ambitious. There were kind and sympathetic words for both of them, meaning looks, and even secret missives. Maulevrier, dazzled by his good fortune, and anxious to avoid active service which would have removed him from the Court, feigned a disease of

the chest and total loss of voice. He kept to his room and fed himself on milk; and his pretended malady not only secured him the sympathy which is due to an interesting invalid, but gave frequent opportunities for whispered conversations. The Duchess of Burgundy was an assiduous visitor, and the Court smiled over her prolonged interviews with the sick man.

Unfortunately, Maulevrier was not content to rest on his laurels; he was not only consumed with ambition, but also dangerously near the border-line of insanity, and the discovery that he had a rival in Nangis provoked him to a transport of passion. One day, seizing an opportunity when Dangeau was absent, he waylaid the princess as she was returning from Mass in the chapel, and offered his hand to escort her back to her apartments. The other equerries, out of respect for his position and infirmity, waived their claims to the honour and fell discreetly behind. Then, as they walked through the state rooms, Maulevrier whispered his suspicions to his terrified companion; abused Nangis to her; threatened to tell the king, Madame de Maintenon, and her husband; and crushed her fingers in his iron grasp till she almost shrieked with pain. At last they reached the door of her apartments, and the princess, more dead than alive, fled to her *garde-robe* and summoned Mme. de Nogaret, her friend and confidante. Mme. de Nogaret advised her to deal prudently with this dangerous lover, and not to drive him to desperate measures; and the advice was not unnecessary, for Maulevrier was doing his best to pick a quarrel with Nangis, and a public *fracas* might well have led to a scandal. Nangis, who trembled for his future, was careful to avoid his fire-eating rival; but for six weeks the princess lived in continual dread of a catastrophe.

Meanwhile her friends had been busy, and at last

Tessé, the father-in-law of the offender, intervened. He decided that, as the doctors had failed to cure the mysterious chest complaint of his son-in-law, the invalid should try the effect of a warmer climate, and took him off to Spain. The princess could now breathe freely, but a year later her terror was revived when Maulevrier, by this time really insane, returned to France and began to bombard her with threatening letters. The situation was becoming intolerable when the dangerous lover, in a fit of madness, threw himself from a window and was killed.

Equally indiscreet was the princess's behaviour to the Abbé de Polignac, who also had to be shipped abroad. Madame, walking in the gardens of Versailles, found on the pedestal of a statue some verses on the subject, which were as intelligible as they were offensive. But it is an extraordinary testimony to the popularity of the princess that, though these episodes had been watched by a scandal-loving Court with amused and often cynical eyes, there was a conspiracy of silence, and neither the king nor the Duke of Burgundy ever guessed the secret.[1] Madame de Maintenon may have known all. If she did, the knowledge, though it must have added to her anxiety, did not diminish her affection.

But in 1708 events occurred which did more to unite the husband and wife than the birth of their children or the death of their eldest son, and which, directly or indirectly, profoundly influenced the lives of both. In the spring of that year, at a time when the fortunes of France were at their lowest ebb, the Duke of Burgundy was despatched to Flanders to put heart into the army. Though personally brave, like all the Bourbons,

[1] One cannot help contrasting this friendly silence with the very different treatment that was meted out to poor Marie-Antoinette, who had many of the Duchesse de Bourgogne's weaknesses and virtues, but not her power of attracting sympathy.

he had no genius for war, being essentially a student rather than a man of action; and, even if he had had the qualities of a commander, it was no light test to be pitted against Marlborough and Eugène. But, though nominally in command, the Duke of Burgundy was deprived of all real initiative, and carried written instructions which forbade him to make any important move without the sanction of Vendôme. Vendôme was, at this moment, at the zenith of his fame. By exaggerating his minor victories in Italy, and carefully concealing his want of substantial success, he had acquired the reputation of being a military genius; and his good fortune had transferred him from Italy to Flanders before the crash came round the walls of Turin. Louis was infatuated with him; and the Court and the nation, clutching eagerly at a straw, hailed him as the one man capable of saving his country and stemming the tide of disaster. In times of national crisis such reputations are not unfrequently achieved even by men who have no real claim to talent; and, when once the vogue has been started, legend grows rapidly round the popular hero. Possessed of considerable military gifts, but slow, obstinate, averse to privations and energetic only by fits and starts, Vendôme was not likely to prove a match for the active genius of Marlborough and Eugène. But for the moment he filled the popular imagination. His slowness passed for caution, his obstinacy for strength, and even his coarse manners and filthy habits were pardoned as the harmless eccentricities of a plain, blunt soldier. His arrival in Flanders was greeted with enthusiasm, and all France waited with feverish impatience for the decisive blow which its hero was about to strike. But instead of victory came the defeat at Oudenarde, the fall of Ghent, and the humiliating spectacle of Lille besieged by the enemy while the French army looked on in helpless inactivity. The

country was angry and disillusioned. But, if Vendôme was unable to win battles, he was skilful in shifting the odium of defeat on to other shoulders than his own; and, for a while, the Duke of Burgundy had to bear the burden.

It must be admitted that his conduct lent some colour to the accusations that were levelled against him. He was at a critical stage in his development, and had not yet learned how to reconcile the self-effacement, which has always been the ideal of Christianity, with the duties of a leader on the field. Fénelon had saved him from himself by teaching him to distrust his instincts and to trample remorselessly on every impulse that savoured of pride. The results of this training had been largely negative, and such positive qualities as it produced would have been more helpful to a monk in his convent cell than they were to a prince to whom Providence had assigned the stern task of commanding men. It may be the duty of a private individual to turn his cheek to the smiter, but it was hardly fitting that the heir to the French throne should bear patiently, and condone, the public affronts of a creature like Vendôme; for misplaced humility is liable to be branded as cowardice. Moreover, an active campaign is not a favourable time for religious exercises. The Duc de Bourgogne attended Mass when he should have been studying maps, and prayed when he should have been giving orders. And his very amusements lacked dignity. Trained to regard with suspicion the ordinary relaxations of his age, and afraid of lapsing into sin, he took refuge in games that were more suitable for a schoolboy than for a general, and, when Lille surrendered, he was found playing at shuttlecock. 'Do what you will,' said Gamaches ironically, 'the Duc de Bretagne (his infant son) will always be your master'; and, on another occasion, the same officer remarked with considerable truth: 'You will certainly win the Kingdom of Heaven,

but as for winning the kingdom of this world—Marlborough and Eugene set about it in a better way than you.'

But Vendôme, influential and unscrupulous as he was, would have been powerless against the future heir to the throne if he had not been backed by an active party at Court. The small *coterie* of Meudon, which hoped before long to rule France through Monseigneur, saw in the situation a chance of removing a rival, and seized the opportunity eagerly. The character of the Duc de Bourgogne was a formidable obstacle in the path of its ambitions; to discredit him personally and destroy his influence was, therefore, the object of the campaign which was now set on foot. Paris was flooded with *chansons* (in some of which the hand of Mme. la Duchesse can be clearly traced) which held the Duc de Bourgogne up to ridicule, mocked at his excessive piety, and taunted him with cowardice. Alberoni, an Italian and a creature of Vendôme's, wrote a letter which was distributed broadcast, in which he lauded his protector to the skies and laid the whole blame for the defeat at Oudenarde on the shoulders of the Duc de Bourgogne. 'I am a Roman,' this precious effusion concluded, 'that is to say, I belong to a race that always speaks the truth; "in civitate omnium gnara et nihil reticente," says our Tacitus. Permit me, after that, to tell you respectfully that your countrymen are quite capable of forgetting all the marvels which the good prince (Vendôme) worked in my country, and which will make his name immortal . . . "injuriarum et beneficiorum æque immemores;" but the good prince is unmoved, knowing that he has nothing with which to reproach himself, and that, so long as he was allowed to carry out his own plans, he was always successful.'

The game was a dangerous one, but for a while it was successful. Even Chamillart, who was ordinarily no

friend to policies that emanated from Meudon, was carried away by the current. Paris and France took up the cry that Vendôme had been thwarted and over-ruled, and that only the cowardice and incompetence of the Duc de Bourgogne had converted a brilliant victory into a humiliating defeat; while the Court, seeing the easy triumph of the cabal and always anxious to be on the winning side, went over in a body to the Meudon faction, extolled Vendôme, and belittled the prince. The few who remained loyal were shouted down, and Saint-Simon, finding himself powerless to stem the tide, retired for a while into privacy till better days should dawn.

But the person who suffered most acutely from this campaign of misrepresentation and slander was the Duchesse de Bourgogne. Her husband's eclipse must necessarily put an end to any hopes she might cherish of retaining her own exceptional position when Monseigneur should become king. But she was not actuated solely, or even principally, by selfish motives. Thoughtless, but fundamentally loyal, the injustice of the attack revolted her and drew her closer to the victim. Scornfully rejecting the overtures of Vendôme, who feared her influence with the king and was anxious to conciliate her, she ranged herself on the side of her injured husband, the avowed and open enemy of his foes. But she possessed little or no political influence. Life had been to her, hitherto, a round of pleasures, and, beyond a general desire to please, she had made no effort to exercise power. Thus, though personally popular, she had no party which she could range in battle order against the forces of Meudon. One staunch and powerful ally she had in the person of Madame de Maintenon. But even Madame de Maintenon's influence, though great, was limited, and she was unable at the moment to devise a remedy or shake the king's confidence in his favourite general. The Duc

de Bourgogne was apprised of what was happening; he was urged to speak plainly and clear himself of the false charges that were being levelled at him. But, with misplaced chivalry, he refused to exculpate himself at the expense of his traducer, and trusted to time to do him justice. Perhaps, too, he hardly realised the seriousness of the situation, and his silence and apparent acquiescence paralysed his friends in the army, who suffered under the insolence of Vendôme but were afraid to speak.

This waiting game, which the character of her husband imposed upon her, was very galling to the impetuous and high-spirited princess. In public she still carried her head high, but at night time she would steal to the bedside of Madame de Maintenon and pour out her sorrows to weary but sympathetic ears. Moreover, her continual dejection irritated the king, who liked to be surrounded by cheerful faces, and neutralised for a time her influence in that quarter. Altogether, in the autumn of 1708, the prestige of the Duc and Duchesse de Bourgogne seemed to the ordinary courtier to have been rudely, if not fatally, shaken, and all who worshipped the rising sun turned their eyes towards Meudon.

In the middle of December 1708 the Duc de Bourgogne returned from the wars. The king received him kindly but not effusively, and the Court, so far as etiquette permitted, gave him the cold shoulder. He was too simple to conceal the joy he felt at being home again with the wife he loved, and his cheerful, smiling face shocked even his friends, who thought that a sad and careworn expression would have better suited the requirements of the case. The young prince was incapable of acting; but he submitted to be schooled by his wife, and lived for a while in dignified retirement.

Almost at the same time Vendôme also appeared at

Versailles; his reception, both there and at Meudon, was flattering, but not quite so cordial as he had expected. Already the enthusiasm which his name had once excited had begun to cool; the defeat at Oudenarde might be ascribed to the incapacity of the Duc de Bourgogne, but his subsequent failure to strike a decisive blow on behalf of Lille needed a good deal of explanation. Meanwhile other officers were coming home, and the truth was beginning to be known in fragments. They spoke, in private, of the general's incompetence and ignorance, of his incurable sloth, which allowed the favourable moment to pass by unused, and of the arrogance which made him deaf to warnings; and when the Duke of Berwick, a soldier of established reputation, returned and denounced the incapacity of the popular favourite, the discontent of the army, long stifled, found public expression, and what had been whispered in the closet began to be shouted on the housetops. Early in the following year Vendôme was informed that his services would not be required for the ensuing campaign and that he would cease to draw his pay as general of the army. The blow was a severe one; the cabal began to realise that their zeal had run ahead of their discretion, and that the weapon with which they had struck at the Duc de Bourgogne was likely to wound their own hands.

But it was not till Puységur undertook to enlighten him that Louis completely abandoned his illusions about the man whom he had learned to regard as his only general. Puységur, who enjoyed the personal confidence of the king, had been serving as lieutenant-general in the army of Flanders. In a private audience, whose original object had been to refute certain charges which Vendôme had made against him, he lifted the veil which Vendôme had skilfully drawn over his own failures, and not only exposed the incapacity of that general in Flanders, but succeeded

in shaking Louis' faith in the brilliancy of the Italian campaigns.

From that moment Vendôme's final downfall was assured. Madame de Maintenon, who watched events closely though she could not always control them, warned the Duchesse de Bourgogne that the time had come to strike a decisive blow at her enemy, and the favourable moment presented itself at Marly soon after Easter in 1709. Vendôme, though somewhat under a cloud, was still a regular guest at Marly and carried his head high. 'To hear him and see him,' says Saint-Simon, 'you would have thought that he was the master of the place.' The Duc de Bourgogne, with his habitual forbearance, showed no resentment against his arrogant rival, but the duchess chafed at his continued presence. One day, when she was sitting down to a game of *brelan* in the *salon* with her father-in-law, Monseigneur, the party happened to be incomplete, and Monseigneur, looking round and seeing Vendôme, called to him to join them and make a fifth. At this the Duchess of Burgundy said, quietly but distinctly, that the presence of M. de Vendôme at Marly was painful enough to her in any case, and that the position would become intolerable if she was obliged to play cards with him. She therefore begged that she might be excused. Monseigneur, who had acted on the spur of the moment and without reflection, recognised his mistake, and Vendôme, who had come up to the card-table, had the humiliation of being sent away again while another took his place. He turned on his heels and withdrew to his room, where he relieved his feelings by a violent outburst of passion.

Having thus brought matters to a crisis, the Duchesse de Bourgogne, supported by Madame de Maintenon, appealed to the king, and Louis did not hesitate. That same evening Bloin was sent to inform Vendôme that

he must no longer expect to be invited to Marly, as his presence there was distasteful to the Duchesse de Bourgogne. A few weeks afterwards the doors of Meudon also were closed to him, and, deserted by his fair-weather friends, he retired to Anet and the companionship of grooms and valets.[1] The personal triumph of the princess was complete, and the Court was quick to realise that henceforth she must be treated not merely as a pretty doll but as a power to be reckoned with.

Meanwhile, from his watch-tower at Cambrai, Fénelon had seen with anxious eyes the gathering of the clouds which for a time overshadowed his cherished pupil. He realised, not without a pang of remorse, what had been the flaws in his system of education, and he determined to repair the mischief. As he had formerly corrected his pupil's faults, he would now correct his virtues. 'Far from trying to flatter you,' he wrote, 'I am going to put together, here, all the worst things that are being said about you. . . . Perhaps nobody will dare to tell you about them; but I dare. I fear nothing but failing in my duty to God and to you.' There are not many men who, at the age of twenty-six, would submit to be schooled and scolded. But the Duc de Bourgogne was not an ordinary man, and the relations between him and Fénelon were exceptional. To some of his tutor's reproaches the prince pleaded guilty; in the case of others, he urged extenuating circumstances; to all he lent a patient and a critical ear. 'Continue,' he wrote, 'your wholesome advice, I entreat you, whenever you think it is necessary and whenever you can do so safely.' And, acting on the prudent counsels given, he set to work to remodel his life. Without sacrificing a single vital principle, he became

[1] It is only fair to add that in 1710, at Philippe V's urgent request, Vendôme was sent to Spain; and there, with a perfectly free hand, he fought a couple of brilliant campaigns.

more human ; and, abandoning his almost monastic seclusion, took his proper and natural part in the life of the world around him. Friends and foes alike were delighted at the change. He had, when he chose to exert it, a real power of attracting; and many who had regarded him as a gloomy *dévot* were astonished to find in him a brilliant talker and a cheerful companion. Without employing any of the baser arts he gradually achieved a popularity which became almost legendary. The light which had been hidden under a bushel was at last set in a candlestick and illuminating all the house.

In 1711 the death of the father still further enhanced the position of the son. The coldness of Monseigneur and the secret enmity of the cabal at Meudon had perplexed and pained him, and induced a certain feeling of constraint and apprehension which he had been unable to shake off. As Dauphin he was secure from attack. He rejected the title of Monseigneur which Louis offered him, as well as the extravagant pension of 50,000 francs a month which his father had enjoyed. 'The state is too deeply in debt,' he said; 'I shall continue to live as Duc de Bourgogne;' and of the 16,000 francs which he drew in that capacity 15,000 were spent in charity. 'Subjects,' he said one day, when refusing to buy a new writing-desk which had taken his fancy, 'subjects will never be assured of the necessaries of life till princes learn to dispense with luxuries.'

The new Dauphin and Dauphine rose to their duties in a way which delighted their friends, and nobody was allowed to suffer by the change. The death of Monseigneur had disappointed an ambitious few, whose open hostility to the Duc de Bourgogne in 1708 seemed to mark them out for punishment, or at least humiliation. But the Dauphin and Dauphine were both entirely free from any feeling of vindictiveness. Affable, courteous, and

conciliatory, they discouraged all intrigues and set themselves to pour oil on the troubled waters. The Dauphine took a naive pleasure in her exalted position. 'She says,' wrote Madame de Maintenon, 'that she feels herself growing every day.' Even the Princess Palatine was charmed into an expression of admiration. The Dauphin felt the responsibilities of power more keenly, but faced them with his customary conscientiousness. By the king's order he was initiated into all the secrets of state. The ministers worked with him, and his advice was asked and listened to on important questions. The weary king was learning more and more to value the real worth and talents of his grandson, and to shift the burden of responsibility on to his young shoulders. 'You will see,' he said; 'he knows everything, and he will do better than I.' The country, too, had at last recognised the qualities of its future king, and Paris and the provinces were as enthusiastic in their praises as they had been lavish in their blame.

It needed just a fortnight to destroy so bright a promise and to shatter such well-founded hopes.

There are several indications that the Duchesse de Bourgogne had not been enjoying the best of health for some years. Her exuberant spirits, indeed, carried her through fatigues that were too much for the ordinary mortal, and she could out-dance any man or woman in France. But, though physically strong, she does not seem to have been constitutionally robust. In 1701 she had had a dangerous illness, brought on by bathing in the river immediately after she had eaten a meal of fruit. For a time she was considered *in extremis*; her confessor had been called in; and her first convalescence had been followed by a serious relapse. Moreover, she had always had very bad teeth, and the frequent abscesses from which she suffered were weakening as well as painful. In

1705 Madame de Maintenon had written: 'The Duchesse de Bourgogne is not well; the doctors prescribe a number of remedies which require much more patience than she is able to give. However, M. Fagon does not think much of the tumour of which she is so proud, for she likes to give big names to her maladies.' Again, in 1708, the same lady notes that the princess is out of health, but finds an explanation in the festivities of the carnival.

The winter of 1711–12 seems to have been an exceptionally unhealthy season, and a dangerous type of measles was claiming victims among old and young alike. On December 28 Madame de Maintenon wrote from Versailles: 'Our dear princess has been tortured for several days by abscesses in her teeth; but she is rather better to-day.' Again, on January 11, she says: 'A few days ago she had a feverish attack; the courtiers were dismayed, and talked of the irreparable loss which her death would cause.' On Monday, January 18, the king went to Marly; the Dauphine arrived with a swollen face, and went to bed immediately; but she got up again at 7 P.M. because the king wished her to be present in the *salon*. She played cards with her face wrapped up, and in *déshabillé*, saw the king in Madame de Maintenon's room, and had supper in bed. The following day she spent in bed, but rose at nine in the evening to visit the king and show herself at the card-table. On Wednesday the swelling had subsided, and for the rest of the visit, which lasted till the end of the month, the Dauphine was living her normal life. On the night of February 5, however, at Versailles, she had a fresh attack of fever. She got up the next morning at her usual hour, and presided over the card-table in the evening; but the fever returned in the night, and on Sunday, February 7, she kept her bed. At 6 P.M. she was in such pain that she was obliged to ask the king, who was anxious to see her, to postpone his

visit. Writing on that day to Mme. des Ursins, Madame de Maintenon said: 'The Dauphine has a fixed pain between the ear and the top of the jaw (just below the temple): the affected part is so small that you could cover it with a finger-nail; she has convulsions and cries like a woman in travail, and at about the same intervals. She was bled twice yesterday, and has had three doses of opium; a moment ago she seemed more easy. I am going to see her, and will close this letter as late as possible in order to give you the last news. . . . 7 P.M.—The Dauphine, after smoking and chewing tobacco, and taking a fourth dose of opium, is rather better. I have just heard that she has slept for an hour and hopes to have a good night.'

Nevertheless, in spite of opium and tobacco, the Dauphine passed the night in great agony, and it was not till 4 P.M. on the following day that the pain finally left her. The patient herself said that she had suffered less at childbirth. The disappearance of the pain, however, was followed by an increase of fever, and she lay in a semi-comatose condition which puzzled the doctors. On Tuesday, February 9, a rash on the skin gave grounds for hope that the illness would prove to be measles; but the rash disappeared and the fever increased. On Thursday, February 11, it was thought desirable that she should confess. True to the maxim of her father, the Duke of Savoy, who used to say, 'Live with the Jesuits, but don't die with them,' she dismissed her Jesuit confessor, Père de la Rue; and, in the absence of Père Bailly, Père Noël, a Franciscan, was sent for. From him she received absolution and extreme unction, and the king came to the foot of her bed to take the sacrament. An hour afterwards she asked that the prayers for the dying might be read, but was told that her condition was not yet desperate and that she must try to get some sleep. The same evening seven doctors held a

consultation, and prescribed the usual remedies—namely, that she should be bled again on the foot, and take an emetic on the following morning. Neither remedy, of course, had any effect except to exhaust the waning strength of the patient; and at 8 P.M. on Friday, February 12, after several hours of unconsciousness, the Dauphine passed quietly away.

The king and Madame de Maintenon, who had been constantly in and out of the sick chamber, were waiting for the end in the Salon de la Paix, dazed by the suddenness and immensity of their loss. When all was over, they rose mechanically and drove off to Marly. Two days later Mme. de Caylus, taking up the pen for Madame de Maintenon, wrote to Mme. des Ursins: '*Tout est mort ici, Madame, la vie en est ôtée.* The princess gave life to everything and charmed us all. We are still stunned by our loss, and every day we feel it more intensely. It is impossible to see the king, or even to think of him, without a feeling of despair and without constant anxiety for his health. As for my aunt,[1] it is impossible for me to speak of her, except to obey her instructions. She cannot write to you, and you will easily understand why.'

'With her,' says Saint-Simon, 'departed joy, pleasure, and every kind of grace; and darkness settled over all the Court. She had been its life, she filled it, possessed it, penetrated its inmost being; and, if it survived her, it was only to drag on a languishing existence.'

One last and somewhat tragic utterance of Madame de Maintenon must be quoted here. 'I shall never cease,' she wrote to the Duc de Noailles, six weeks after the sad event, 'I shall never cease to weep for the Dauphine; but every day I hear of things which make me think that she would have caused me grievous disappointments (*qu'elle m'aurait donné de grands déplaisirs*). God has taken her

[1] Really, her cousin.

in His mercy.' To what exactly Madame de Maintenon is alluding remains an unsolved mystery. Some, arguing from a passage in Duclos, have supposed that the Dauphine betrayed state secrets to her father, the Duke of Savoy; but such of her letters as are extant in the archives of Turin lend no colour to this accusation. Is it not more probable that Madame de Maintenon had for the first time discovered the dangerous character of the flirtations with Nangis and Maulevrier? The lack of affection of the Duchesse de Bourgogne for her husband had always been a source of keen anxiety to the elder lady, and their perfect union her dearest wish. Moreover, it was the habit of Madame de Maintenon always to find in the workings of Providence an obviously beneficent purpose.

When the Dauphin received the news of his wife's death he was himself lying prostrate on a bed of sickness. For four days he had hardly left the Dauphine's side, except when his friends forced him for a few minutes into the gardens to breathe the air; but on the fifth day he was seized with an attack of fever, which was at first supposed to be of the ordinary tertian kind. The doctors forbade him to leave his room, and kept him purposely ignorant of the extreme gravity of his wife's condition. The blow, therefore, fell with paralysing force, and, for the few days that he survived it, he lived like one in a dream. Heart-broken, for he had loved the Dauphine with an almost passionate love, he looked drearily into the future, and it was only by a supreme effort of will that he succeeded in stifling the impulse to revolt, and bowed submissively to the divine will.

On Saturday, February 13, his friends persuaded him to leave Versailles in order that he might be spared the sounds from the death-chamber, immediately above his head, where the body of his wife was to be embalmed and coffined. He was lifted into a carriage, and, at eight in

the morning, he drove off to Marly. Like a wounded thing, he would gladly have crept away into solitude and hiding; but at Marly there was no privacy, and Court etiquette required that he should receive visits of condolence from all who were entitled to pay them. On the evening of the fatal 12th the king had left Versailles without seeing the bereaved husband, feeling himself unequal to the ordeal; but at Marly the dreaded interview could no longer be postponed. Saint-Simon, who was an eye-witness of the scene, has left us one of his vivid pictures. The Dauphin, after hearing Mass and receiving the visits of Madame de Maintenon and the princes and princesses, had been left alone in his room. 'Meanwhile the hour of the king's *réveil* was approaching; his three gentlemen-in-waiting entered the Dauphin's room, and I ventured to go in with them. He showed me that he noticed my presence by a look of gentle affection which moved me deeply. But I was terrified by his appearance, the strained, fixed, and almost fierce expression of his eyes, the alteration in his features, and the numerous marks, livid rather than red, which I and others noticed on his face. He was standing, and a few moments afterwards they came to tell him that the king was awake. The tears which he had been holding back began to flow. He turned, but said nothing, and remained motionless. The three gentlemen-in-waiting suggested to him several times that he should go and speak to the king, but he neither stirred nor answered. At last I went up to him and proposed the same thing; and, as he did not reply, I ventured to take him by the arm and represent to him that, sooner or later, he would have to see the king, that the king was expecting him, and that it would be more gracious not to defer the visit; and, so speaking, I pushed him gently towards the door. He gave me a look that pierced my heart, and went out. I followed him for a

few yards, and then withdrew for a minute to recover myself. I never saw him again. God grant that, hereafter, I may see him for ever in that world to which His mercy has removed him.' [1]

As the poor Dauphin well knew would happen, everybody at Marly had assembled in the king's room to witness the interview; and they were not disappointed of a scene. The king embraced his grandson tenderly and repeatedly, but could utter nothing but sobs and a few broken words; till, alarmed by the Dauphin's appearance, he found voice to summon Fagon. By the latter's advice the Dauphin went back to bed. He never rose again. For a few days his strength ebbed and flowed, but he hardly attempted to struggle. The springs of life were broken, and he was eager to be gone. He received the sacrament shortly after midnight on Wednesday, and died at half-past eight on Thursday morning, February 18, 1712. He was within a few months of his thirtieth birthday.

Even then death had not struck its last blow at the ill-fated family. The Dauphin had left two sons, the Duc de Bretagne, a strong and lively child aged five years and a half, and the Duc d'Anjou, who was still a baby. At the beginning of March both the young princes were struck down with measles, and on the 8th, shortly after midnight, the elder succumbed to disease and the doctors. Of the union which had promised so much for France there was nothing left but a pretty ailing child, whom posterity was afterwards to know and execrate as Louis XV.

Saint-Simon, writing of the death of the Duc de Bourgogne, says: 'France succumbed to this last punishment. God had shown us a prince of whom we and the world

[1] There are few things in literature more touching than this sudden outburst of emotion on the part of a man who was habitually so coldly critical and even cynical.

were not worthy. He was already ripe for eternal blessedness!' And Fénelon expressed the same thought in a letter to Mme. Lambert. 'God thinks differently from men. He destroys what He seemed to have formed expressly for His glory. He is punishing us, and we deserve the punishment.' How far the Duc de Bourgogne would have fulfilled the expectations formed of him can only be a matter of conjecture; but speculation about the 'might have beens,' though generally futile, is always fascinating; and in this case we have certain well-determined data to guide us. We know, for example, in what spirit the prince viewed the task that lay before him. It was his habit to clear his own thoughts and fortify his good resolutions by setting them down on paper, and some of these documents, originally intended only for his private eye, have been preserved.

'Vulgar and uneducated people,' he wrote, 'sometimes say, "If only I were king!" Others, better informed, but with vain and superficial minds, think very much the same thing. The wise man is thankful that he was not born to govern others, and prays God to grant wisdom to those to whom Providence has assigned this painful duty. . . . Of all the men who compose a nation the one who receives least pity, and yet deserves it most, is the sovereign. He suffers from all the penalties of greatness without being able to enjoy any of its pleasures. He is, in the midst of his subjects, the man who has the least liberty, the least freedom from anxiety, and the fewest of those moments when one can enjoy a cheerful and a pure repose. There can be no rest for a king. If he passes from one house to another, his duties follow him. If he spends an idle day he is overwhelmed with work on the morrow, or else the machine stops. . . . His whole life is a round of tedious functions, harassing cares, laborious tasks, and gnawing anxieties. . . . He has palaces, but he

does not know them; wealth, but he cannot enjoy it. . . . He is in reality poorer than the poorest of his subjects because all the needs of the State are *his* needs, and they always exceed his resources. The father of a family is never rich when his income does not suffice for the sustenance of his children. A king is poor with all the poverty of his subjects. And on the moral side to what dangers is he not exposed? He is responsible, at one and the same time, for the evil which is done in his kingdom and for the good which is not done. He can do what he pleases; will he never do more than he ought, or otherwise than as he ought? If he appears to desire what God's law condemns, how many interested flatterers will try to justify his inclinations, to second his ambitions, and to tranquillise his conscience! He is surrounded by sunken rocks: for no one is it easier to leave the right channel; for no one is it harder to get back to it again.'

These are not the words of an eager reformer, who sees a great work before him and longs to grapple with it; and, in a war with abuses, enthusiasm is half the victory. But, on the other hand, the Duc de Bourgogne never dreamed of shirking the task; he sought, and perhaps would have found, in religion a motive power as strong as, and far more constant than, enthusiasm. 'One of the commonest and most dangerous temptations,' he wrote, 'for those who are charged with the welfare of multitudes is to let themselves be overwhelmed by the difficulties of the task. . . . The soul needs a supernatural motive to support it in a life of sacrifices that are repugnant to the natural man. But when a king, always mindful of the eye of God which watches him, remembers that he is the minister of His mercy towards man . . . when he remembers, like Saint Louis, that the thorns of his earthly crown will change to roses in the kingdom of rest, his soul rises above Nature

and itself; nothing can discourage him, and he is not weary in well doing. He does well to the good because they are good, and to the evil to encourage them to become good, and because he must imitate the Divine Father "Who makes His sun to rise on the just and on the unjust." '

And these thoughts were not merely the aspirations of the study; they were the active principles of his daily life. Moreau, his valet, when he lay dying, sent to beg for his master's prayers because 'he knew no man whose prayers would be more acceptable to God.' Had the Duc de Bourgogne become king, France would undoubtedly have been governed by a good man and through good men. It is true that good men are not always wise men, and nations have suffered quite as much under virtuous as under profligate princes. But the Duc de Bourgogne had brains as well as piety; and, above all, he had a passion for facts. At his instigation, and under his direction, Louis had sanctioned a kind of general inquiry into the health of France and unwittingly provided the most damaging proof of his own failure as a ruler. It was the first time that statistics had been collected and grouped together in an orderly way, and they filled forty-two folio volumes. The Duc de Bourgogne set himself to master this solid mass of facts with a success that argues a prodigious patience and a still more prodigious memory. And, as a result, he would have brought to the problems of government a knowledge such as few rulers have possessed. He knew what were the resources of his country, its agriculture, trade, manufactures, navigable rivers, roads, and ports. He knew, too, that in some places the population had diminished by a fourth, a third, or even a half; that in certain rural districts the peasants, exhausted by hunger, no longer dared to marry; that houses were crumbling to ruin and industries decaying. He knew that in the province of le Maine the

number of canvas-makers had dwindled from 20,000 to less than 6,000, and that in the Touraine there were a bare 4,000 silk-weavers where there had once been 60,000. If he had reigned there can be no doubt that the Duc de Bourgogne would have ended the epoch of war and extravagance which was bleeding France white, and have given the marvellous recuperative powers of the nation a chance of repairing the damage. And a contented peasantry in 1789 would probably have saved the monarchy.

What political and administrative changes he would have effected it is harder to determine, but changes there would certainly have been. The Duc de Bourgogne was no lover of autocracy, and it may safely be said that Louis XIV's system would have been either swept away or profoundly modified. What would have taken its place? Probably the nobles would have recovered some of their political importance. Saint-Simon's enthusiasm for the prince's schemes, which he had been privileged to discuss, precludes all reasonable doubt on that head. But the 'third estate' would also have been admitted to a direct share in the government of the country. In 1711 Fénelon, in conjunction with the Duc de Chevreuse, and with the knowledge and assent of the prince, had drawn up a rough scheme of reforms which he called *Plans de Gouvernement*. Decentralisation was the key-note of the plan. Farmers of taxes and *intendants* were to be abolished, and three different kinds of assemblies were to be substituted. First, in each diocese, there was to be a small body called '*Établissement d'assiette*,' composed of the bishop, the principal *seigneurs*, and representatives of the 'third estate.' To them would be entrusted the duty of settling the incidence of taxation. Secondly, there were to be 'Provincial Estates,' made up of the representatives of each diocese who were to revise and correct the distribution of imposts, and regulate the objects on

which the revenue was to be employed. Lastly came the States General, composed of three deputies from each diocese, to wit the bishop, a *seigneur* elected by his peers, and a representative of the third estate, likewise chosen by his own order. They were to meet every three years and to sit for as long as they deemed it necessary; they were to control the finances and be free to discuss such questions as police, justice, agriculture, war, the conclusion of peace, and foreign policy.

The scheme was only a scheme, and might well have been much modified in practice. But there are two points in it which are worth noticing. First, that, though the third estate was in a minority, its claims to political influence were definitely recognised. The tendencies of the age could hardly have failed to extend and consolidate that influence. And, secondly, that the power which holds the purse-strings inevitably (though probably Fénelon had not realised this) in the long run controls the policy.

On the whole, it is reasonable to suppose that the Duc de Bourgogne would have laid the foundations of political institutions capable of growing into the national life and of adapting themselves to its changing needs. The country was not ripe for a revolution; and revolution itself is only a confession that existing institutions are incapable of expansion and must be violently replaced by others, whose end no man can foresee and which have none of the sanction of time and tradition behind them. It was the curse of France that though the monarchy, as it was conceived by Richelieu and Louis XIV, gave unity to what had been an aggregation of provinces with different laws and varying social customs, it destroyed the Provincial States, which might have been developed into a national and representative assembly. But the memory of their vanished privileges was still cherished by the *bourgeoisie* in 1715, and, if the Duc de Bourgogne had

done no more than vest some of these ancient local rights in a central and representative body, he would have rendered his country a signal service. For the Great Revolution of 1789, which, in spite of the intrusion of the Paris mob, was mainly a revolution of the middle classes, failed chiefly for this reason, that its leaders had had no training in politics and were unable to direct their noble enthusiasms by the calm light of practical experience or a solid knowledge of affairs.

CHAPTER XII

DUC D'ANJOU AND DUC DE BERRY

Birth and education—The Duc d'Anjou—Described by Madame—Becomes King of Spain—The Duc de Berry—An attractive child—His temper—An ignorant man—His marriage—Led by his wife—Quarrels with the Duchesse de Bourgogne—Reconciliation—The shirt—His breakdown in public—Loses his son—Last illness and death—His character and appearance.

Of the two younger sons of the Grand Dauphin, one was destined to be the first of the Spanish Bourbons, the other died in early manhood at a moment when he seemed likely to be the eventual successor of Louis XIV on the throne of France. They were born, respectively, in December 1683 and August 1686, and were brought up with the Duc de Bourgogne in the southern wing of the palace. Beauvillier was their *gouverneur*, and Fénelon supervised their studies; but, as was natural, they did not receive such an elaborate education as their elder brother, and had separate tutors of their own.

Philippe Duc d'Anjou was, by nature, the most docile and the least attractive of the three princes. A fair-haired, pasty-faced, unwholesome-looking boy, he possessed neither the vivacity nor the headstrong temperament of his brothers, and was admirably fitted to play the part of peacemaker in the quarrels which were of frequent occurrence between the other two children. Madame, writing of him in 1700, when he was seventeen years old, described him as follows: 'He is neither so lively nor so clever as

his younger brother, but he has other excellent qualities. He has a good heart and he is generous—a rare thing in his family. Moreover, he is truthful, and nothing would induce him to tell a lie: he will be a man of his word when he grows up. He is compassionate and brave . . . In appearance he is thoroughly Austrian, and his mouth is always open. I am constantly telling him of it; when I do so he shuts it, for he is very docile, but he soon forgets and opens it again. I like him better than the Duc de Bourgogne, for he is good-hearted and not contemptuous.'

With this dull and pacific temperament the Duc d'Anjou seemed destined to play a very unimportant rôle in history, but in the November of 1700 a new and dazzling career was suddenly thrust upon him. Louis XIV, in spite of diplomatic denials, had always cherished a secret ambition to 'abolish the Pyrenees' and unite France and Spain, if not under the same crown at least under the same dynasty; and, after a few days of real or pretended hesitation, he definitely accepted the will of Charles II, by which the second of his own grandsons was summoned to the vacant throne.

The new king, Philippe V, accepted the situation in the resigned spirit in which the Oriental submits to fate; and, after much ceremonious leave-taking, he started on his journey south, accompanied by his two brothers and the Duc de Beauvillier. The final separation took place at St. Jean de Luz, and Philippe passed on alone into the country of his adoption. His subsequent career furnishes an exciting chapter in Spanish history, but does not enter into the scheme of these studies. He survived his brothers by many years, and died in 1746.

The Duc de Berry was a much more engaging child than either of his brothers. Less haughty than the Duc de Bourgogne and less solemn than the Duc d'Anjou, his high spirits and frank boyish face made him a

universal favourite. 'The Duc de Berry,' said Madame, 'is always merry'; and the Dauphine, noticing her partiality for the little prince, laughingly dubbed him 'Madame's Berry.' His cheerful prattle amused and charmed the elder lady; in 1697, describing the family dinner which followed the marriage of the Duc de Bourgogne, she wrote: 'I enjoyed myself at table, for I was sitting next to my dear Duc de Berry, and he made me laugh. "I can see my brother ogling his little wife," said he; "but, if I cared to, I could ogle too, for I learned how to do it long ago: you have to look steadily, sideways"; and, so saying, he imitated his brother so drolly that I had to laugh.' In the following year the same lady gave a characteristic picture of the three brothers. 'The day before yesterday the king allowed the three princes and the Duchesse de Bourgogne to go to the play for the first time . . . the piece was the '*Bourgeois Gentilhomme*.' The Duc de Bourgogne quite lost his serious look and laughed till the tears came into his eyes; the Duc d'Anjou was so delighted that he sat there in ecstasies with his mouth gaping and his eyes fixed on the stage; the Duc de Berry laughed so much that he nearly fell off his chair.'

But, in spite of his naturally cheerful and good-natured disposition, the boy was liable to fits of uncontrollable passion. 'My dear Duc de Berry,' wrote Madame in 1699, 'has been put, so to speak, under arrest. He is to be shut up for a week, nobody is to see him, and the door of his apartment is locked. He really deserves the punishment, for he is excessively passionate. Last Monday he was out shooting rabbits with his brothers. As he is very impulsive in all that he does, his governors told him to shoot as much as he liked, but not in the direction of his brothers. In spite of the warning he fired in the forbidden direction and came within a foot of killing his eldest brother, the Duc de Bourgogne. His *sous-gouverneur*, M. de Razilly,[1]

[1] Madame wrote the name 'Raselie.'

snatched the gun from his hands and wouldn't let him fire again. Whereupon he flew into such a passion that he tried to dash out his own brains; and would have done so, if they hadn't taken away from him a huge stone which he had seized in his hands. He called his *sous-gouverneur* "rascal, traitor, scoundrel." M. de Razilly said, "I shall complain to the king and he will do me justice." "Yes," replied the Duc de Berry, "he will have your head cut off, and you deserve it." In consequence of all this, the king has had him put under arrest; but he doesn't mind a bit. Yesterday was his third day of captivity, and he does nothing but dance and sing. Yesterday morning, when his *sous-gouverneur* came into the room, he said in the most cheerful voice: "Well, sir; when is the ball coming off? I shall be allowed to dance, I suppose?" M. de Razilly replied: "How can you think of dancing? don't you know that you are in prison?" "I, in prison!" said the Duc de Berry; "understand, sir, that people of my rank are not treated like that: prison would be well enough for you!"

Temper of this kind is common enough in children and is more amusing than alarming. The Duc de Berry, even in his bad moods, was not vindictive or cruel, and, in spite of his faults, was a thoroughly jolly, happy-go-lucky boy. But the man who emerged from this entertaining chrysalis was decidedly disappointing. For the liveliness which had charmed in the boy was rather the result of an impulsive and somewhat undisciplined character than the first-fruits of a quick intelligence. As a man, the Duc de Berry was good-hearted and fundamentally loyal, but stupid and entirely futile. He had never shown any enthusiasm for his studies. 'I have no luck,' he said sadly in 1700; 'I have no chance of becoming a king like my brothers, and, now that the Duc d'Anjou is going, I shall have all the *gouverneurs* and

sous-gouverneurs on my hands; and I have more than I can do with already. What will become of me when I have the others?' The fear (quite groundless in the present instance) of making the younger prince a more accomplished gentleman than his elder brother perhaps prevented the authorities from putting much pressure on the unwilling horse; but it is a noticeable indication of the prince's slow progress that he was not released from tutelage till January 1706, when he was already in his twentieth year.

Like his father, the Grand Dauphin, he made use of his freedom to bid a long farewell to books and study, and threw himself into the one occupation that interested him deeply—namely, the chase. It was not without a keen regret that Madame saw her favourite developing into a vacant young man, and disappointment gave a touch of bitterness to her pen. 'The Duc de Berry,' she wrote in 1709, 'isn't *dévot* at all; he cares for nothing in the world, neither God nor man . . . Provided that he enjoys himself, he doesn't mind how . . . Here are his ordinary amusements: he shoots, plays cards, chatters with young ladies, and guzzles. Such are his pleasures. I had almost forgotten to add that he slides on the ice: for that comes in too!' And again in 1710: 'It's not surprising that the Duc de Berry behaves like a child, for he never talks to anybody who has sense. Day and night he is in the Duchesse de Bourgogne's rooms, where he plays the *valet de chambre* to her ladies. One makes him fetch a table, another her work, a third gives him some other commission. He stands all the time, or sits on a little stool, while all the young ladies are reclining on sofas or in easy chairs.'

Madame, at this time, had no affection for the Duchess of Burgundy, and was not likely to view with composure the transfer of her favourite's allegiance; and it is only

fair to remember that, if the Duc de Berry's life was rather purposeless, it was at least free from the graver faults. He never succumbed to the temptations which had proved too strong for his grandfather, and in a Court where the standard of virtue was not excessively high he preserved a clean record. Moreover, his affections were sincere and loyal; for his brother he always retained a tender regard, and, till intrigue and malice had done their worst, he lived on terms of intimate friendship with the Duchesse de Bourgogne. A good and clever wife would have made a man of him, for his intentions were sound and he was easily led. Unfortunately, the bride who was chosen for him (for he had little voice in the matter himself) proved his evil genius. Madame la Duchesse[1] had hoped to secure him for her daughter, and her schemes were nearly crowned with success. But Madame la Duchesse was the avowed enemy of the Duchess of Burgundy and the brain of the small *coterie* at Meudon which desired above all things to estrange Monseigneur from his eldest son. The Duchess of Burgundy realised betimes that the proposed alliance would almost inevitably destroy the harmony that subsisted between the two brothers, and she set to work to parry the threatened blow. A common dread of Madame la Duchesse had formed a bond of union between herself and the Duchess of Orleans, the other surviving daughter of Madame de Montespan. Madame de Maintenon had encouraged the intimacy, and the troublous months of 1703, when the princess had been sorely in need of sympathy, had put a seal on the friendship between the two women. Mademoiselle, the eldest daughter of the Duchess of Orleans, was of an age to marry, and it was on her that the Duchess of Burgundy fixed her choice. The battle was short and sharp; but

[1] The eldest surviving daughter of Madame de Montespan and Louis XIV.

the princess's influence was great with the king, and the king's wishes were law to Monseigneur. Madame la Duchesse had to accept defeat, and the marriage was celebrated in the new chapel at Versailles in 1710.

The Duchess of Burgundy congratulated herself on the success of her efforts, but the sequel was a cruel disillusionment. The young Mme. de Berry possessed most of the least attractive vices: she mistook a pert and overweening pride for dignity, and gratitude was to her a meaningless phrase. She at once took advantage of her new position to form an offensive and defensive alliance with Madame la Duchesse, and went over bag and baggage to the enemy. The Duc de Berry was too infatuated with his wife to offer any serious resistance: her superior intelligence awed, and her blandishments seduced him; and he allowed himself to be towed, half reluctantly, in her wake. For his brother he still retained the old affection, but his relations with the Duchess of Burgundy became strained. She, for her part, after sustaining a few impertinent rebuffs from her former *protégée*, gave up the attempt to win the couple back by kindness, and realised, too late, that her good intentions had only succeeded in planting a dangerous enemy within the citadel at Meudon.

The unexpected death of the Dauphin in 1711, however, removed all danger from that quarter, and made the position of the de Berrys a precarious one. The duke had been sincerely attached to his father, of whom he was the favourite son, a love of the chase and a lack of intellectual interests forming a mutual bond between them. His wife, who had no personal loss to lament, was nevertheless prostrated by the sudden ruin of her ambitions, and had good grounds for fearing the just resentment of the new Dauphine. But the Bourgognes were singularly free from the petty spite and malice which entered so largely into the lives of their contemporaries, and the first use they

made of their enhanced prestige was to effect a gracious and tactful reconciliation with the offenders.

The Duc de Berry would have liked nothing better than to accept the proffered hand and let bygones be bygones. But his wife, as soon as she realised that she had nothing to fear, gave rein again to her spiteful proclivities. Among the many ancient ceremonies which had been incorporated into the strange mosaic of Court etiquette was the custom by which a new Dauphin received his shirt, at least once, from the hands of the male relative who stood next below him in the feudal hierarchy. The service was an act of homage and was, naturally, performed either at the *lever* or the *coucher*. On the death of Monseigneur it became the duty of the Duc de Berry to render this service to his brother, while the Duchesse de Berry was expected to perform the same office for the new Dauphine. In view of the recent reconciliation nobody supposed that there would be any difficulties, and the Duc de Berry was ready, and almost eager, to comply with the time-honoured usage, which, while Louis XIV remained the master, could not be dispensed with. But the Duchesse de Berry refused to perform what she was pleased to regard as a servile act, and allowed her refusal to be so widely known that the incident became the talk of the whole Court. The Duke and Duchess of Burgundy wisely pretended to know nothing of what was happening, but they were nervously anxious to get the ordeal over; for, if any rumours of Mme. de Berry's contumacy had reached the ears of the king, there would have been a stern reprimand and probably a renewed estrangement between the two families. The Duc d'Orléans, fortunately, appreciated the danger and used his influence with his disagreeable daughter to induce her to see reason. The Duc de Berry attended the Dauphin's *coucher* two days after his father's funeral,

handed him the shirt, and received a fraternal embrace; but several days elapsed before his wife could bring herself to acknowledge defeat. At last, however, she had to yield. The Dauphine received her services with charming grace and friendliness, and the incident was closed.

Whether the reconciliation would have stood the test of time and the secret ill-will of the Duchesse de Berry is more than doubtful, but the early months of 1712 closed the chapter for good and all. The Duc de Berry mourned his brother and sister-in-law long and sincerely, and found no compensation in his own enhanced importance. Only one delicate child now stood between him and the throne, but he was fitted neither by nature nor by training to take his brother's place. Of public affairs he was profoundly ignorant, and in the presence of the king he was as nervous and tongue-tied as poor Marie-Thérèse had been. Nor were his few public appearances of a brilliant description. In 1713 it fell to his lot to represent the king at a meeting of the Paris Parliament which had been summoned to register an important decree. The sitting was to open with a complimentary speech from the President, de Mesmes, to which the prince was expected to reply.

'He was much worried about this reply,' says Saint-Simon. 'Mme de Saint-Simon, to whom he confided his difficulties, managed to procure a copy of the President's forthcoming address, and gave it to the Duc de Berry in order that he might be able to frame his reply correctly. But this task was too much for him: he confessed his incapacity to Mme. de Saint-Simon,[1] who proposed that I should be given the commission, and he was charmed with this solution of the difficulty. Accordingly I wrote out a reply which covered a page and a half of ordinary letter

[1] Mme. de Saint-Simon was *dame d'honneur* to the Duchesse de Berry.

paper. The Duc de Berry thought it good, but too long to learn by heart. I shortened it, but he wanted it shorter still; till, finally, I cut it down to three quarters of a page. Then he set to work to learn it by heart, and, on the eve of the *Séance*, recited it in private to Mme. de Saint-Simon, who gave him every encouragement.' On the appointed day the Duc de Berry duly presented himself before a distinguished audience, which included the Duc d'Orléans, two Princes of the Blood, five clerical and eighteen lay peers. 'When he had taken his place,' continues Saint-Simon, 'there was some difficulty in securing silence. But, as soon as it was possible to be heard, the President delivered his complimentary address. It was now the Prince's turn to reply. He rose, raised his hat slightly, looked at the President and said, "Monsieur": after a moment's pause he repeated, "Monsieur"; looked at the company and said once more, "Monsieur" . . . and there he stuck, without being able to produce a single word save this "Monsieur." I was opposite the fourth *President à Mortier*, and so had an uninterrupted view of the prince's confusion. I was sweating with anxiety but could do nothing . . . At last the President, seeing that there was no remedy, ended this painful scene by raising his hat and bowing low to the Duc de Berry, as if the reply had been delivered. After which he gave the king's officers permission to speak. You may imagine the dismay of all the courtiers who were present and the astonishment of the lawyers.'

But the poor prince's humiliations were not over yet. When he returned to Versailles, Mme. de Montaubon, who had not yet heard of the catastrophe, met him with the customary and meaningless flattery of the Court, and congratulated him in public on 'the dignified eloquence with which he had addressed the Parliament.' As soon as he could escape from her importunities, the Duc de

Berry sought out Mme. de Saint-Simon, and, taking her alone into his private *cabinet*, threw himself on to a sofa, burst into tears, and poured his griefs into her sympathetic ears. He was dishonoured, he said, and people would think him a fool and an idiot. Then, suddenly falling on the king and Beauvillier, he exclaimed, 'Their one idea has been to make me stupid, and to stifle all my powers. I was the younger son; I was a match for my brother: they were afraid of the consequences, and have annihilated me. They only taught me how to play cards and hunt, and they have succeeded in making me a fool, incapable of anything, and an object of universal contempt and scorn.' The reproach was hardly deserved. If the Duc de Berry was ignorant, the fault was mainly his own; but it is characteristic of weak natures that they desire to shift the blame for their own failings on to other shoulders.

In the April of 1713 the Duc de Berry lost his infant son, the Duc d'Alençon, who had been born in the previous month, and 'was inconsolable.'[1] His own health at this time was far from good, for Madame wrote: 'I am very anxious about the Duc de Berry. Every day he has what is called a slow fever and looks horribly ill: his brother didn't look worse when he died.' Still, nobody anticipated the sudden end, which came in 1714 and was the last of the cruel blows which fate dealt, in such rapid succession, at the royal family.

It was spring-time and the king was at Marly, whither the Duc de Berry had followed him, leaving his wife, who was expecting shortly to be confined, at Versailles. According to his wont he had been much in the hunting-field. On Thursday, April 26, while saving his horse from the effects of a sudden slip, he had fallen heavily against the saddle. This accident may have been

[1] Madame' letters.

the immediate cause of his death. At all events, according to his own subsequent account, it was followed by symptoms which pointed to the rupture of some internal blood-vessel; but he said nothing at the time, and went about his ordinary pursuits. On Monday, April 30, he rose at the usual time, intending to go out wolf-hunting; but, after attending the king's *lever* at 9 A.M., he was seized with a shivering fit which obliged him to return to bed. Any chance he might have had of ultimate recovery was destroyed by the prompt administration of a violent emetic. Prostrated by continual nausea and fever he survived for four days, and, on Thursday, May 3, he was bled for the eighth time. Shortly before the end his illness seemed to have taken a sudden turn for the better: the feeling of nausea passed away and the fever diminished. Madame and the Duchesse d'Orléans were in the sick chamber, and the former wrote an account of what took place to the Duchess of Hanover. 'The poor prince thought he was completely out of danger. "At present, Madame," he said, with a laugh, "I think I may tell you that I am saved. I have no fever and feel quite well. Give a chair to Madame," he cried, "and a seat to Mme. d'Orléans, and let us talk." "Certainly not," I replied. "Talking might bring back the fever: you must whisper." While he was chatting he was seized with a violent attack of hiccoughs, and his breath came with such difficulty that he could hardly speak. Mme. d'Orléans really thought that he was out of danger, and, when we left the room, she was astonished to see my eyes full of tears. She asked me why I was crying. "Mon Dieu, Madame," I replied, "don't you see from his breathing, his voice, and that hiccough, that the prince is dying?" She wouldn't believe me at the time, but she soon found out that I had spoken truly.' In fact, after a short period of unconciousness, the Duc de Berry died at 4 A.M. on

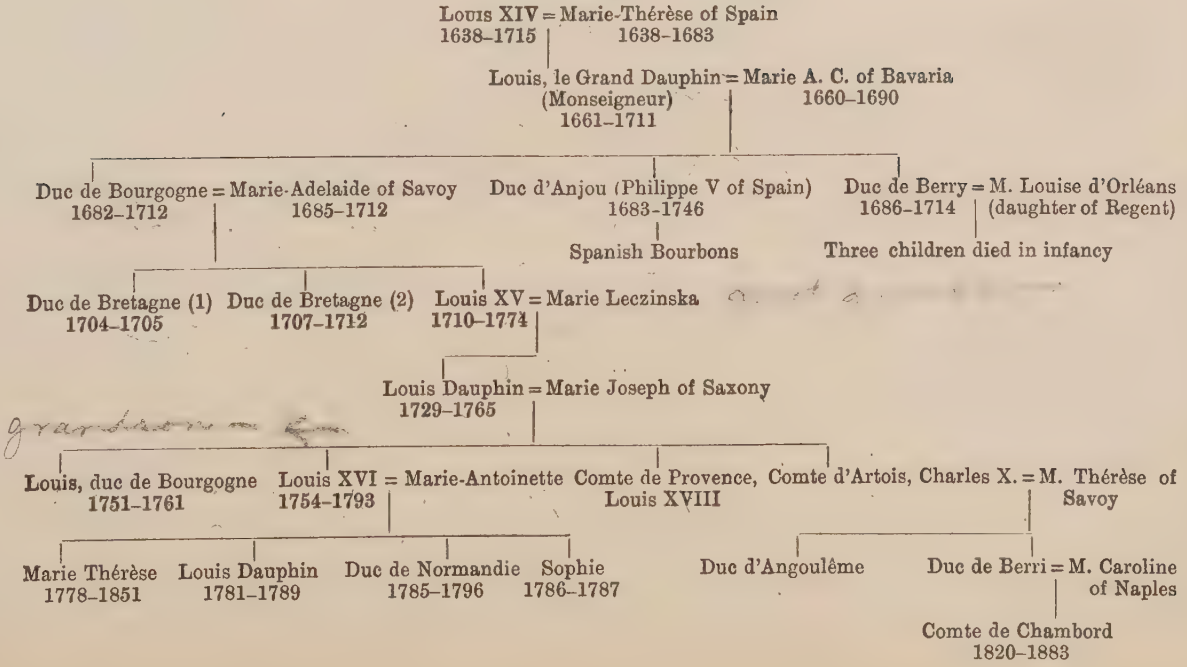
Friday, May 4, in his twenty-eighth year. His heart was taken to the Val-de-Grâce and his body laid in the Bourbon vault at Saint-Denis.

'He was,' says Saint-Simon, 'a man of medium height and somewhat stout, blonde, with a fresh, handsome face which seemed the index of a brilliant health. He was made for society and pleasure, to which he was devoted. The best of men, the kindest and most accessible, free from pride and vanity but yet not lacking in dignity, he possessed only a moderate intelligence. Nevertheless, he had good common sense and was capable of listening, understanding, and choosing the right course among many specious ones . . . He loved truth and justice, and, though not markedly religious, he hated anything that savoured of irreligion . . . The best looking and most affable of the three brothers he was also the most popular, and his death was universally regretted.'

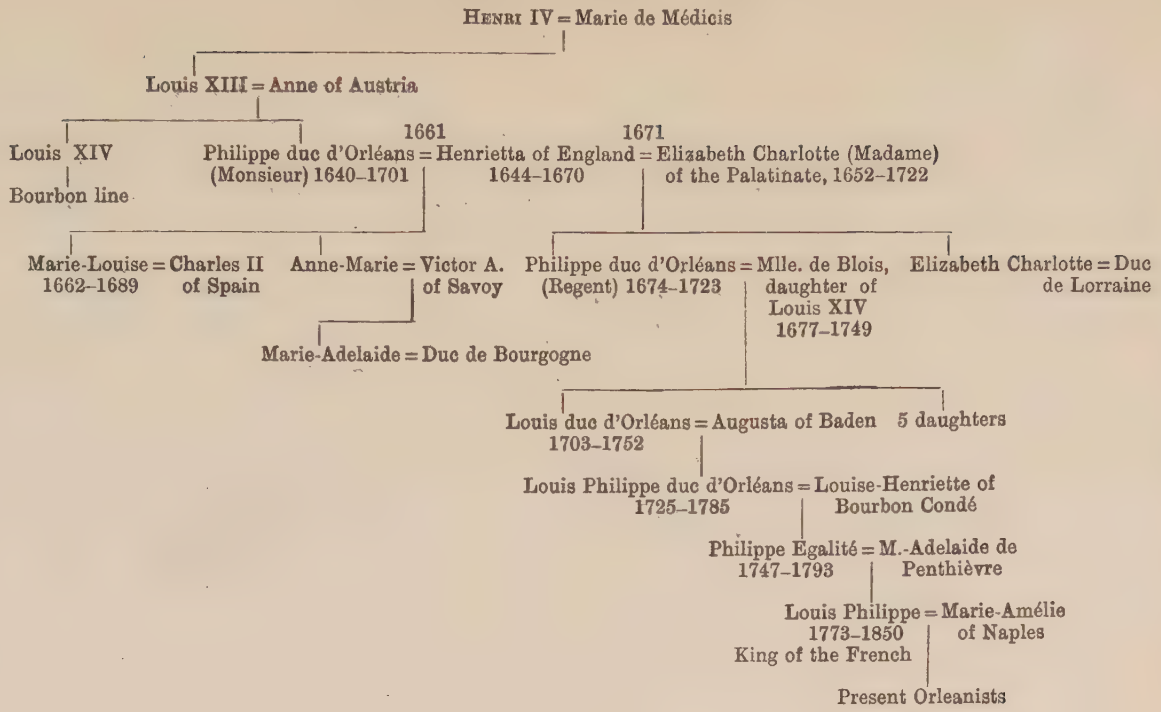
His wife survived him for five years and lived to be the heroine of some of the worst scandals of the Regency.

GENEALOGICAL TABLES

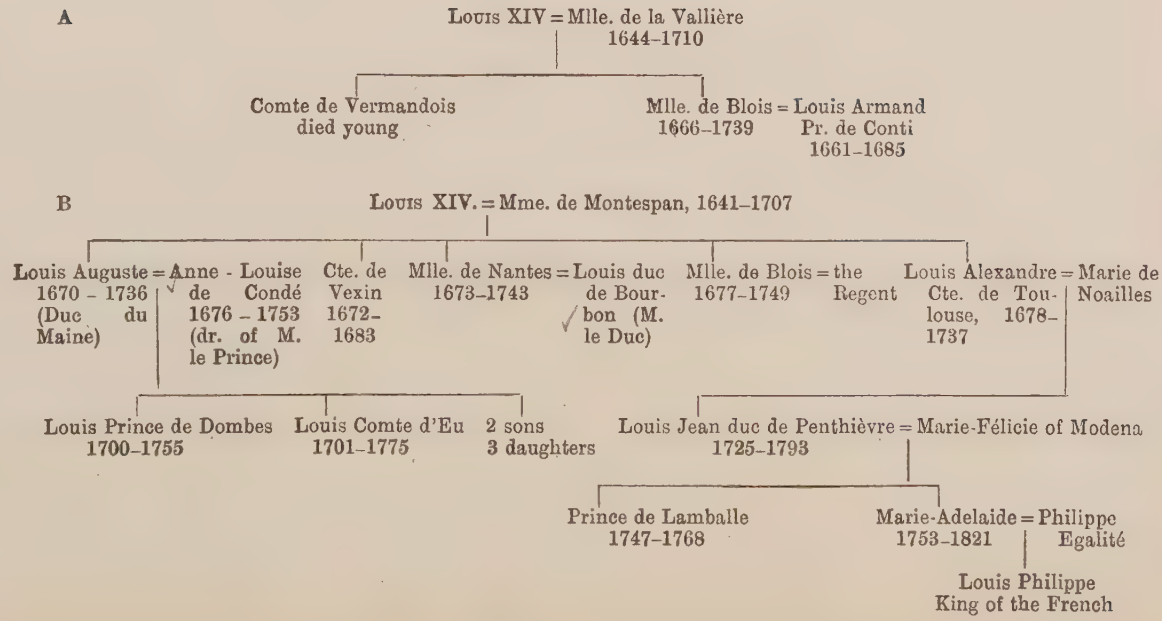
I. *THE BOURBON LINE*



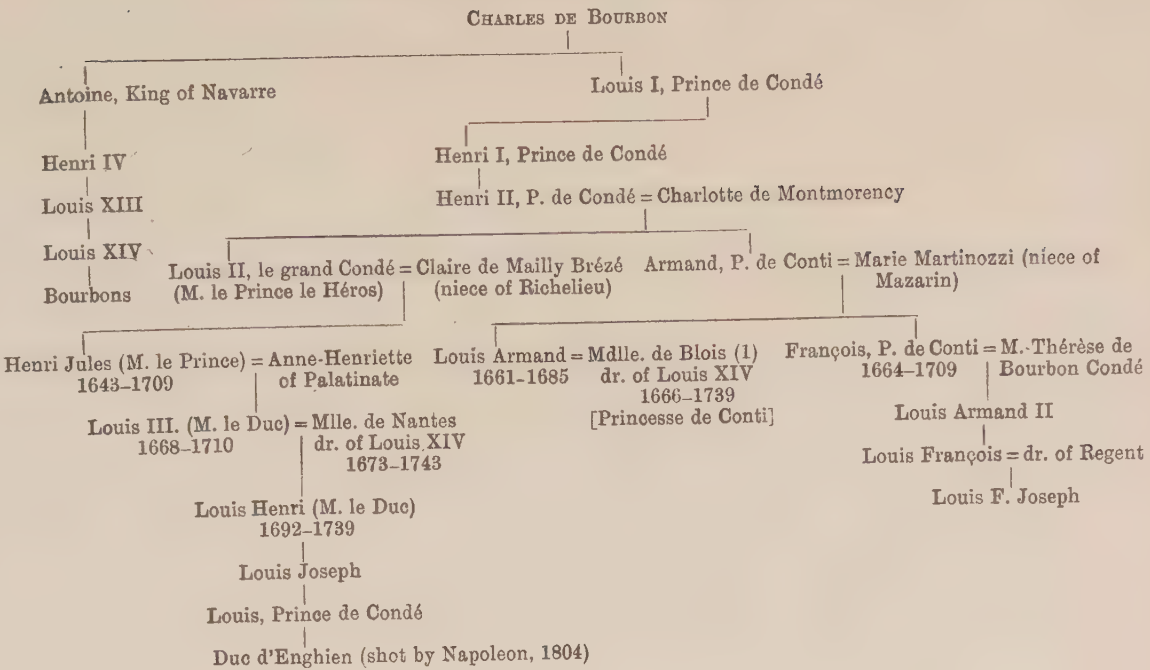
II. *THE ORLEANS LINE*


Henri IV = Marie de Médicis
Louis XIII = Anne of Austria
Louis XIV
Bourbon line
Philippe duc d'Orléans (Monsieur) 1640–1701
1661
Henrietta of England = 1644–1670
1671
Elizabeth Charlotte (Madame) of the Palatinate, 1652–1722
Marie-Louise = 1662–1689
Charles II of Spain
Anne-Marie = Victor A. of Savoy
Marie-Adelaide = Duc de Bourgogne
Philippe duc d'Orléans (Regent) 1674–1723 = Mlle. de Blois, daughter of Louis XIV 1677–1749
Elizabeth Charlotte = Duc de Lorraine
Louis duc d'Orléans = Augusta of Baden 5 daughters
1703–1752
Louis Philippe duc d'Orléans = Louise-Henriette of Bourbon Condé
1725–1785
Philippe Égalité = M.-Adelaide de Penthièvre
1747–1793
Louis Philippe = Marie-Amélie of Naples
1773–1850
King of the French
Present Orleanists

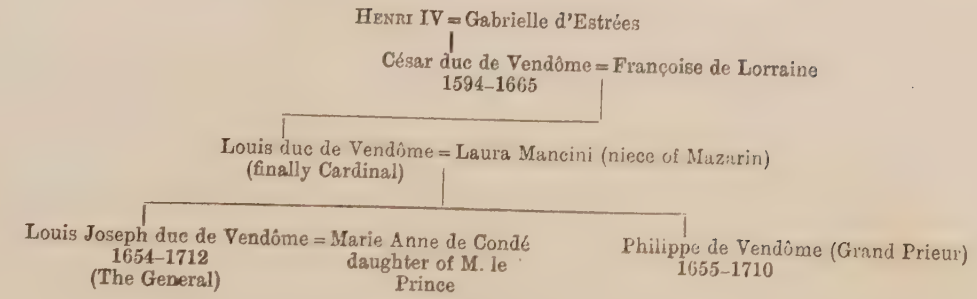
III. *ILLEGITIMATE CHILDREN OF LOUIS XIV*



IV. *CONDÉS AND CONTIS* (*Princes of the Blood*)


Charles de Bourbon
Antoine, King of Navarre
Louis I, Prince de Condé
Henri IV
Henri I, Prince de Condé
Louis XIII
Henri II, P. de Condé = Charlotte de Montmorency
Louis XIV
Louis II, le grand Condé = Claire de Mailly Brézé
(M. le Prince le Héros)
(niece of Richelieu)
Armand, P. de Conti = Marie Martinozzi (niece of Mazarin)
Bourbons
Henri Jules (M. le Prince) = Anne-Henriette of Palatinate
1643–1709
Louis Armand = Mdlle. de Blois (1)
1661–1685
dr. of Louis XIV
1666–1739
[Princesse de Conti]
François, P. de Conti = M.-Thérèse de Bourbon Condé
1664–1709
Louis III. (M. le Duc) = Mlle. de Nantes
1668–1710
dr. of Louis XIV
1673–1743
Louis Armand II
Louis François = dr. of Regent
Louis Henri (M. le Duc)
1692–1739
Louis F. Joseph
Louis Joseph
Louis, Prince de Condé
Duc d'Enghien (shot by Napoleon, 1804)

V. *ILLEGITIMATE CHILDREN OF HENRI IV*


Henri IV = Gabrielle d'Estrées
César duc de Vendôme = Françoise de Lorraine
1594–1665
Louis duc de Vendôme = Laura Mancini (niece of Mazarin)
(finally Cardinal)
Louis Joseph duc de Vendôme = Marie Anne de Condé
1654–1712
(The General)
daughter of M. le Prince
Philippe de Vendôme (Grand Prieur)
1655–1710

INDEX

Alberoni, Cardinal, 337
Anet, 342
Anjou, duc d', *see* Philippe V or Louis XV
Anne of Austria, 114, 116, 129, 130, 132, 133, 144, 147, 148, 149, 196, 198, 235, 236, 237, 239, 240
Anne, Queen of England, 328
Antin, duc d', 21, 48, 142
'Appartement,' 45, 263, 322
Argenson, marquis d', 168, 169
Aubigné, Agrippa d', 194, 195
Aubigné, Charles d', 195, 199, 200, 207–210, 215, 222, 223
Aubigné, Charlotte d', 222
Aubigné, Constant d', 195
Aubigné, Françoise d', *see* Mme. de Maintenon
Aubigné, Françoise d' (daughter of Charles), *see* Noailles
Aubigné, Madame d', 195, 196, 197
Aubigné, Madame d', wife of Charles, 207–210

Barbesieux, M. de, 20, 172, 305
Barry, Mme. du, 60
Bart, Jean, 97
Beauvillier, duc de, 65, 69, 74, 75, 121–123, 168, 221, 222, 314, 319, 324, 325, 357, 358, 367
Bernard, Samuel, 117, 118
Berry (Charles de Bourbon), duc de: birth and education, 357; dances at Marly, 48; marriage, 281, 282, 362, 363; infatuated with his wife, 282; at Monseigneur's death, 312, 314; hands the shirt, 364, 365; breaks down in speech, 365–367; death of his son, 367; illness and death, 63, 288, 367-369
Character: described by Saint-Simon, 369; an attractive child, 358, 359; 'Madame's Berry,' 281, 359; his father's favourite, 306; his temper, 359, 360; his pursuits, 361; ignorant, 360, 361, 365-369; estranged from duchesse de Bourgogne, 363; reconciliation, 364
Berry (Marie - Louise - Elisabeth d'Orléans), duchesse de: described, 281, 282; her marriage, 281, 282, 362, 363; scene with Madame, 283, 284; her gluttony, 281, 282, 289; enemy of the Bourgognes, 363, 365; at Monseigneur's death, 312, 314; other references, 55, 85, 86, 289, 367
Berwick, Duke of, 340
Bessola, 297
Bloin (premier valet de chambre), 25, 224, 341
Blois, Mlle. de, *see* Orléans, duchesse de
Blois, Mlle. de, *see* Conti, princesse de
Bontemps (premier valet de chambre), 25, 26, 45, 46, 157, 302
Bossuet (Bishop of Meaux), 78, 141, 150, 164, 204, 221, 291, 294, 319
Boudin, 307, 309
Boufflers, maréchal de, 177, 182
Bougeoir, 46
Bouillon, Cardinal de, 74, 265
Bourbon, duc de, *see* Duc, M. le
Bourbon, waters of, 63, 110
Bourgogne, Louis, duc de: a tragic figure, 317; birth, 317; joy at his birth, 75; childhood, 318–324; nearly shot, 359; education, 319–324; first Communion, 322;

marriage, 326, 359; the affaire Rohan, 36; ordered to play *brelan* at Marly, 251; at Meudon, 307; meets Fénelon at Cambrai, 325; Oudenarde, 334–339; at fall of Lille, 336, 337; unpopularity, 337, 338; returns to Versailles, 339; remodels his life, 342, 343; at Monseigneur's death, 312, 314, 315; refuses title of Monseigneur, 343; income, 343; popular, 343; receives shirt from duc de Berry, 364; illness, 348; wife's death, 348; goes to Marly, 349; last interview with King, 349, 350; death, 350; conjectures, 355, 356

Character: a saint, 318, 322, 350, 351, 353; early faults, 318–320; affection for Fénelon, 324–326, 342; passion for knowledge, 320, 323, 324; no military capacity, 335; religious, 5, 336, 348, 351, 352; ascetic, 331, 332; charitable, 343; free from vindictiveness, 343, 344, 363; laughs at 'Bourgeois Gentilhomme,' 359; practical joke at Marly, 20; passionately fond of his wife, 326, 331, 339; heart-broken at her death, 348; views on monarchy, 343, 351–353; fond of facts, 353, 354; his plans, 354, 355

Bourgogne (Marie-Adelaïde de Savoie), duchesse de: practical jokes, 20, 70; not afraid of King, 176; King's first impressions of her, 326; fond of Mme. de Maintenon, 224, 326, 327, 328, 330; letter to Mme. de Maintenon, 331; influence with the King, 4, 328; miscarriage at Marly, 176, 177; makes fun of her husband, 70, 332; her flirtations, 332–334; grief after Oudenarde, 338, 339; procures Vendôme's disgrace, 341, 342; at Monseigneur's death, 312, 314, 315; becomes Dauphine, 343, 344; her health, 344, 345; last illness, 345–347; death, 347; letter of Mme. de Maintenon, 347, 348; grief of Court, 350, 351; charm of manner, 327, 328; fond of dancing, 16, 48, 49, 295; fond of cards, 329; scrape over lansquenet, 330, 331; popularity, 327, 328, 334, 338, 347; described by Madame, 266, 280, 281, 286

Bretagne, duc de (1), 55, 87, 334

Bretagne, duc de (2), 336, 350

Brissac, duc de, 44, 242

Buvat, Jean, quoted, 230

Cabale des Dévots, 80, 147

Canaples, comte de, 67

Carte, M. de la, 256

Castries, Mme. de, 313, 314

Cavoye, marquis de, 73, 114–116, 190

Caylus, Mme. de, 67, 143, 156, 227, 231, 347

Chambre ardente, 83, 84, 151

Chamillart, Michel de, 4, 31, 36, 51, 172, 175, 224, 226, 233, 305, 337

Charles II of Spain, 300, 358

Chartres, duc de, *see* Orléans, duc de

Chartres, duchesse de, *see* Orléans, duchesse de

Châteaurenaud, maréchal de, 73

Châteauthiers, Mme. de, 264, 268, 273

Châtillon, duchesse de, 41, 42

Châtre, marquis de la, 77, 78

Chevreuse, duc de, 69, 121–123, 168, 221, 222, 325, 354

Choin, Mlle., 97, 298–300, 308, 310, 311, 314, 315

Choiseul, Mlle. de, *see* Mésalliances

Clérambault, Mme. de, 51, 268

Coëtlogon, Mlle. de, 115

Coislin, duc de, 40, 41

Colbert, 8, 121, 139, 148, 173, 332

Commun, the Grand, 24, 25

Compiègne, review at, 28, 222

Condé, *see* Prince, M. le, and Duc, M. le

Condé, the great, 29, 89, 95, 163

Conti (Louis-Armand) Prince de, 82, 94

Conti (François-Louis), Prince de, 77, 78, 93, 94–98, 249, 250, 296

Conti (Marie-Anne, Mlle. de Blois), Princesse de, 71, 94, 161, 257, 298, 303, 305, 306, 308–310

Conversation, art of, 66
Coulanges, Mme. de, 66, 112
Courtiers, their duties, 42–45; send plate to mint, 182; futility of existence, 55–57
Croix, M. de la, 299, 300

Dangeau, duc de, 6, 187, 333
Dangeau, Mme. de, 223, 225, 226, 227, 231
Dauphin, the Grand, *see* Monseigneur
Dauphine (Marie-Anne-Christine of Bavaria), 161, 211, 259, 277, 278, 281, 297, 298
Desgranges, 41, 42
Desmarets, Nicolas, 117, 118
Doctors, *see* Health
Dubois, Cardinal, 262
Dubois, valet de chambre, 293
Duc (Louis III, duc de Bourbon), M. le, 72, 92–94, 96, 98, 99, 192, 238, 239, 251
Duc (Louis-Henri, duc de Bourbon), M. le, 94
Duchesse (Louise-Françoise, Mlle. de Nantes), Mme. la, 20, 51, 53, 71, 93, 96, 161, 278, 303, 308, 310, 315, 316, 330, 337, 362, 363
Duclos, 348
Duras, duchesse de, 178
Duras, maréchal de, 61

Eccentrics, 75–78
Edict of Nantes, revoked, 132, 164–167, 215, 216
Effiat, marquis d', 241, 242
Espinoy, Mme. d' (*née* Lislebonne), 305, 306, 309, 315
Evreux, comte d', 48

Fagon, 64, 65, 186, 224, 250, 301, 307, 309, 310, 345
Félix, 302
Fénelon (Archbishop of Cambrai), Abbé de, 6, 11, 122, 129, 220–222, 294, 319–326, 342, 343, 351, 354, 357
Feuillet (Canon), 245, 246
Fontainebleau, 21, 176, 227, 268, 273, 278, 279
Fontanges, Mme. de, 154
Fontmort, Mme. de, 208
Foucquet, 108, 109
Frèsque, comte de, 92, 93

Gamaches, marquis de, 336, 337
Games: balls, 47, 48; billiards, 51; cards, 50, 51; chess, 52; dancing, 47; driving, 55; fireworks, 55; hunting, 47; music, 54; novels, 54; portraits, 53; tennis, 54; water-parties, 53
Gesvres, duc de, 71, 72, 141
Gesvres, marquis de, 249
Glapion, Mme. de, 224
Gobelin, Abbé, 66, 201, 204–206, 213, 220
Godeau (Bishop of Vence), his Catechism, 131, 132
Godet des Marais (Bishop of Chartres), 221
Gramont, duc de, 67
Grandcolas, *see* Mésalliances.
Guiche, comte de, 237
Guiche, duchesse de, 71
Guignonville, M. de, 206
Guitry, marquis de, 38
Guyon, Mme., 220, 221, 324

Hanover, Sophia Electress of, 246, 254, 276, 286, 288, 289
Harcourt, Princesse d', 20, 51, 76, 77, 164
Harlay, Archbishop of Paris, 156, 269
Health: dirt, 59, 60; small-pox, 61, 123, 307, 308, 315; infant mortality, 61; long life, 61; vapours, 62; gout, 62, 63; doctors, 63, 65, 285; quacks, 65, 190, 191; remedies, 285, 286; 1712 unhealthy, 60, 61, 345
Helvetius, 65
Henri IV, 34, 79, 129
Henriette d'Angleterre, 240–243
Herfort, Mme. d', 70
Heudicourt, Mme. d', 81, 223, 225, 226, 227
Huxelles, maréchal d', 304, 314

James II of England, 113, 174, 248, 265, 266

La Chaise, Père, 156, 168, 181, 221
La Fontaine, 31, 320
La Porte, 130
La Voisin (Monvoisin) Mme., 82–84, 151
Landass, Mme. de, 272, 273
Langlée, M. de, 116, 117
Langres, Bishop of, 51, 52
Lauzun, duc de, 62, 72, 99–116, 137, 201
Le Brun, 190, 191
Le Camus, Cardinal, 169
Le Nôtre, 6, 15, 160
Le Tellier, Père, 168, 188, 189, 190, 309
Le Vau, 8
Leibnitz, 270, 274
Lesdiguières, duchesse de, *see* Eccentrics
Lislebonne, Mlle. de, 303, 308, 310, 315
Lislebonne, *see* Espinoy, Mme. d'
Lorraine, Chevalier de, 39, 237, 241–243, 262
Lorraine, duc de, 253, 265, 266
Lorraine, duchesse de, 260, 265, 266
Louis XIII, 7, 129
Louis XIV, appearance, 4, 133, 140, 186; early years, 129–136; his own minister, 136–138; conception of monarchy, 27, 28, 126, 137, 138, 251; begins education afresh, 138, 139; the new régime, 139–141; marriage, 143–146; friendship for Lauzun, 100–102, 113; banishes Lauzun, 107, 108; the King's friend, 118–120, 179; jealous of Conti, 95; cajoles S. Bernard, 117, 118; forbids duelling, 71, 98, 115; friendship for Mme. de Maintenon, 152–156; breaks an arm, 47, 156; secret marriage, 156, 157; revokes Edict of Nantes, 164–167; his ministers, 29, 171–175; daily routine, 42–46; sad old age, 183–185, 229, 230, 288; health, 127, 185, 186; his will, 184; death, 186–192, 230, 289, 290

Character: memory for faces, 22, 127; kind to servants, 25; dislikes criticism, 81; methodical, 137, 163, 184; appetite, 62, 127, 186; likes honesty, 65, 256; self-control, 46, 84, 102, 128, 137; ignorant, 135, 136, 139; generous, 133, 165, 275, 315; charm of manner, 140; courteous, 135; humble, 178; fond of flattery, 141, 142, 183; no sense of humour, 142, 143; inaccessible, 158, 159; selfish and inconsiderate, 21, 163, 176, 177, 180; loses temper, 170, 171, 180; stickler for etiquette, 178, 179, 257, 258, 280, 364; likes fresh air, 180; fond of music, 135, 185, 187; fond of hunting, 47, 120, 186, 187; fond of Molière, 52, 142, 185; no conversation, 44, 225; apparent want of feeling, 174, 175, 251; 'je verrai,' 143; proud of gardens at Versailles, 160, 164; fond of Marly, 21, 214; unbends at Marly, 20, 49; proud of military knowledge, 148, 173, 174; superstitious, 81; credulous, 183; courage, 184; no imagination, 128; his accurate eye, 14–16

Family relations with: his mother 130, 133, 148, 149; the queen, 144–147, 156; Monsieur, 130, 235, 237, 240, 242, 247, 248, 250; Madame, 256–264, 266, 275–280, 288–290; Monseigneur, 161, 295, 296, 301, 302, 308–316; Dauphine, 297; duc de Bourgogne, 339, 344, 350; duchesse de Bourgogne, 4, 175–177, 326, 330, 341, 347; la Grande Mademoiselle, 105–107, 110; mistresses, 146–152, 155, 200, 204, 205, 210; illegitimate children, 151, 162, 184, 201, 261

Religious views: general, 133, 192; makes Court dull, 164; hatred of Huguenots, 132, 164–167; hatred of Jansenism, 133, 167, 168, 222; destruction of Port Royal, 168, 169; hatred of unorthodoxy, 31, 32, 122, 221; banishes Fénelon, 324, 325;

scruples over sack of Palatinate, 169, 170, 259; jealous of his rights, 169; no ecclesiastic in council, 169; regrets over his wars, 189
Louis XV (duc d'Anjou), 64, 85, 184, 189, 225, 229, 350
Louis XVI, 3, 10, 42
Louise, Raugrave, 270
Louvois, 6, 14, 15, 101, 102, 157, 170–175, 211, 259
Lulli, 54
Luther, Martin, 271, 272
Luxembourg, duc de, 49, 304

Madame (Elisabeth Charlotte, Princess Palatine) described by herself, 252; by Saint-Simon, 253; childhood, 253–255; marriage, 243, 255; adventure with Suisse, 23; relations with her husband, 244, 245, 255, 256; protected by King, 256; rebuked, 257; grief at sack of Palatinate, 258; hates Mme. de Maintenon, 259; friend of Dauphine, 259, 297; loses King's favour, 259, 260; finds Court dull, 164; her son's marriage, 261–265; daughter's marriage, 265, 266; her letters, 70, 266, 267; life at Saint-Cloud, 244, 245, 267; dislikes French women, 267; and French schools, 70; her French, 267; despises French Court, 268; death of Monsieur, 248, 249, 251, 274, 275; scene with Mme. de Maintenon, 275–279; admitted to King's cabinet, 278; widowhood, 279; at Monseigneur's death, 313; ill, 284–286; dislikes duchesse de Bourgogne, 279, 280, 327; reconciled, 286, 287; grief at son's unpopularity, 287; admitted to 'Sanctuaire,' 288; scene with Mme. de Berry, 283, 284; death of duc de Berry, 288, 368; of her aunt, 288, 289; illness of her son, 289; at King's death-bed, 289, 290; last letters, 290
Character: fond of Nature, 255; kind to step-daughters, 243, 244; careless of dress, 257, 258; sleeps at sermons, 258; stern, but fond of children, 260; boxes son's ears, 265; humour, 268; her food, 268, 269; her books, 270; her religion, 270–272; her medals, 273; her pets, 273, 274; fond of theatre, 270, 279; stands up for her rights, 279–281; her remedies, 285, 286; 'le plus sot homme du monde,' 244; other references, 54, 62, 68, 69, 82, 85, 129, 162, 304, 318, 359
Mademoiselle, la Grande (Mlle. de Montpensier), 79, 87, 88, 102, 103, 104–113, 243, 270
Maine, duc du, 110, 162, 163, 179, 180, 184, 188, 202, 204, 205, 224, 247
Maine, duchesse du, 12, 59, 60, 162, 163, 191
Maintenon, Mme. de, childhood, 195, 196; conversion, 196; marries Scarron, 197; widowhood, 198–200; pension from the Queen, 198; gouvernante, 152, 201; gains influence over King, 163; buys Maintenon, 203; intends to retire, 202, 205; plans for the future, 203, 204; quarrels with Mme. de Montespan, 155, 201, 202, 205, 206, 210; at Barèges, 204, 205; marriage of her brother, 207–210; dame d'atour, 210; marries the King, 156, 211, 212; presides over family circle, 161; treated as Queen, 213, 214, 222; revocation of Edict of Nantes, 214, 215; converts her relations, 216; Saint-Cyr, 216–222; breaks with Fénelon, 221, 222; death of brother, 223; a day of her life, 224–227; anonymous letters, 227; educates duchesse de Bourgogne, 227–229, 232; grief at her death, 229, 347, 348; last years at Versailles, 229; death of King, 186–191, 230; retires to Saint-Cyr, 230; sees Peter the Great, 231; death, 231; her property, 231; scene with Madame, 275–279; visits Mlle. Choin, 299; at Monseigneur's death, 308–310; her influence, 193, 194, 231–233, 259, 338, 341
Character: general, 193, 194, 215,

231–233; proper pride, 199, 200; plans for life at Maintenon, 203, 204; likes to have her own way, 206; practical, 207–210, 217, 218; disinterested, 153, 154, 212, 231; disapproves of royal extravagance, 212, 214; likes wit, 210; likes truth, 213; her opinions on marriage, 69; on women, 70; on rank, 75, 211, 212; on sermons, 80; on the clergy, 81, 221, 222; horror of draughts, 21, 180, 214, 227; kind to the Queen, 156; views on religion, 215, 217, 219; horrified at sack of Palatinate, 170; rebukes Louis, 155, 178; the peas, 223, 224; interest in education, 216–220, 227, 228; disliked by Madame, 259; affection for duchesse de Bourgogne, 326–332
Maisonfort, Mme. de, 220, 222
Mancini, Marie, 54, 143
Mansart, 10
Maréchal (King's surgeon), 63, 65, 186, 224
Marie-Antoinette, 5, 42, 59, 60, 334 *n*
Marie Leczinska, 5
Marie-Thérèse (Queen), 115, 144–147, 150, 155, 156, 198, 213
Mariette, 83
Marly: site, 16; plan of, 17; gardens, 18; accommodation, 18; cost, 19, 212; etiquette at, 19, 21, 178; practical jokes at, 20, 48, 49, 72; le Repos, 59; dull, 55; balls at, 47–49, 183; King's last visit, 187; Mme. de Maintenon at, 17, 214, 227; draughts at, 227; expenses cut down, 182; scenes at, 177, 238, 302, 310, 315, 316, 341, 349, 350
Mascaron, Père, 80
Massillon, 78
Maulevrier, comte de, 332–334, 348
Mazarin, Cardinal, 129, 130, 132, 136, 143, 160, 235
Mésalliances, 74, 75
Mesmes, Président de, 365, 366
Meudon, 47, 97, 98, 174, 299, 307–311
Molière, 31, 52, 142, 147, 152, 185, 270, 292
Montfort, duc de, 251
Monseigneur, the Grand Dauphin birth and education, 146, 291–294; no influence, 295; income, 296, 343; marriage, 297; at duc de Bourgogne's birth, 75; a widower, 298; falls in love with Mlle. Choin, 298; marries her, 298; Spanish succession, 301; his indigestion at Marly, 301, 302; prejudiced against duc de Bourgogne, 306, 337, 343; breaks with Vendôme, 341, 342; ill of small-pox, 307–309; death, 309–311; funeral, 315; death attributed to coffee, 269

Character: described by Saint-Simon, 292, 296; afraid of King, 161, 295; fond of Mlle. Choin, 300; life at Meudon, 303; his conversation, 225, 304; his apathy, 4, 266, 294, 297, 304–306; rude to Madame, 281
Monsieur (Philippe duc d'Orléans), birth and education, 235; kicked by de Guiche, 237; his privileges, 237; defends them, 238; traps M. le duc, 238, 239; at his mother's death, 239, 240; his campaigns, 240; suspected of poisoning Henriette, 240–243; second marriage, 243; Court at Saint-Cloud, 239; quarrels with King, 246–248; death, 250; funeral, 251; practical joke on him, 72; unworthy favourites, 39, 241, 251, 256

Character: described by Saint-Simon, 234; effeminate, 236, 237, 244; shows courage, 240; his conversation, 161, 223, 246; 'la plus sotte femme,' 244; fond of cards, 244; an egoist, 245; superstitious, 245, 246; no *dévot*, 246; fond of oysters, 268
Montaubon, Mme. de, 366
Montausier, duc de, 291–294, 319
Montbazon, duc de, 142
Montespan, Mme. de, 14, 83, 84, 88, 102, 106, 107, 110, 111, 143, 149–155, 164, 200–202, 204, 205, 209, 210, 216
Moreau, 353
Motteville, Mme. de, quoted, 136

Nangis, marquis de, 332, 333, 348
Nanon, 198, 212
Nantes, Mdlle. de, *see* Duchesse, Madame la
Neuillant, Mme. de, 195–197
Noailles, Cardinal de (Archbishop of Paris), 212, 221, 222, 232
Noailles, maréchale de, 91
Noailles, duc de (Comte d'Ayen), 210, 347
Noailles, duchesse de, 210
Nogaret, Mme. de, 333
Novion, 40
Noyert, 101
Noyon, Bishop of Orleans, 37–39

Orléans, Gaston duc d' (brother of Louis XIII), 235
Orléans, Philippe duc d', *see* Monsieur.
Orléans, Philippe duc d' (duc de Chartres, afterwards Regent), dabbles in black arts, 85, 86; sent to Spain, 167, 168; last interviews with King, 188, 190; relations with Mme. de Maintenon, 190, 230, 233 (*n.*), 287; and Mdlle. Séry, 247; described by Madame, 260, 261; his marriage, 261–265; slapped by Madame, 265; defends his daughter, 284; suspected of poisoning, 287, 288; greedy, 289; at Monseigneur's death, 313; other references, 52, 54, 128, 246, 247, 253, 260, 276, 282, 290
Orléans (Françoise-Marie de Bourbon, Mdlle. de Blois, then duchesse de Chartres), duchesse d', 20, 161, 248, 261–264, 268, 269, 278, 313, 362, 363, 368
Orleans, Bishop of, *see* Noyon

Palatine, Charles Louis, Elector, 253–255, 258, 269, 270
Panache, Mme., 69
Paris, 60, 182, 266
'Parvulo,' the, of Meudon, 299, 303, 307, 337, 340
Peasants, their sufferings, 57, 79, 181, 182, 353
Peter the Great, 231
Philip IV of Spain, 144
Philippe V of Spain (duc d'Anjou), 138, 300, 301, 342 *n.*, 357, 358, 359
'Plans de Gouvernement,' 354, 355
Polignac, Abbé de (afterwards Cardinal), 19, 96, 97, 334
Port Royal des Champs, 65, 168
Practical jokes, 20, 72, 73
Precedents, 34–42, 99
Prieur, le Grand, 51, 97, 98, 304
Prince, M. le (Henri-Jules Prince de Condé), 40, 41, 49, 52, 89–92, 94
Princesse, Mme. la, 90, 92, 93, 316
Purnon, 242
Puységur, marquis de, 340, 341

Quacks, *see* Health
Quaadt, Fräulein von, 254

Racine, 31, 197, 198, 218
Razilly, M. de, 359, 360
Regent, *see* Orléans, duc d'
Rheims, Archbishop of, 50
Richelieu, duchesse de, 211, 212
Rochefoucauld, duc de la, 38–40, 118–120, 146, 177, 179
Rohan, Cardinal de, 188
Rohan, duc de, 36, 37, 315
Roland, Mme., 13
Rousseau, 272

Saint-Aignan, duc de, *see* Mésalliances
Saint-Cloud, 60, 161, 239, 241, 242, 244, 247–250, 266, 267, 274
Saint-Cyr, 52, 59, 191, 216–222, 227, 229–231
Saint-Hérem, Mme. de, 75, 76
Saint-Mars, 108
Saint-Simon, duc de, *see* Preface; anecdotes of: audience with King, 159; his bad arm, 63; at duc de Bourgogne's death, 349, 350
Saint-Simon, Mme. de, 69, 365, 367
Saint-Simon, Mme. de, mère, 41, 42
Saint-Sulpice, 81, 223
'Sanctuaire, le,' 278, 279, 288
Savoy, Duke of, 175, 346, 348

Savoy, Duchess of, 326, 327
Scarron, Paul, 53, 157, 197, 198
Scarron, Mme., *see* Maintenon, Mme. de
Seissac, marquis de, 50, 51
Séry, Mlle., 85, 247
Sévigné, Mme. de, 67; quoted, 150
Staal, Mme. de, quoted, 12, 162
Suisses, 23, 24, 75, 313
Superstition, 81–86
Survivances, 172

Tancrède, 248
Tessé, maréchal de, 334
Torcy, Mme. de, 178, 179
Toulouse, comte de, 163, 265, 288
Tour, Père de la, 92
Trémoïlle, duc de la, 64, 315
Trévoux, Père de, 250
Trianon, 14–16, 72, 187
Turenne, maréchal de, 6, 29, 201

Valentinois, duc de, 47
Vallière, Mlle. de la, 94, 147–149, 150, 200
Vallière, duc de la, 311
Valois, Mlle. de, 285
Vatteville, Abbé de, 123–125
Vauban, maréchal de, 30, 31
Vaudemont, Prince de, 35
Vendôme, duc de, 29, 38, 51, 52, 97, 98, 304, 335–342
Ventadour, Mme. de, 85, 189, 249, 275–279
Versailles, its size, 1, 12; hunting lodge, 7; alterations in 1662, 7; rebuilt, 8; transformed, 10; decoration, 10; Court removed there, 10; its discomfort, 11, 58; accommodation for dependents, 12; bad smells, 13; never empty, 22; servants, 24, 75; state apartments, 10; petits cabinets, 59; the gardens, 159, 160; Galerie des Glaces, 11; scene at Dauphin's death, 311–314; the tassels, 45, 46
Vervins, M. de, 77
Villarceaux, Mme. de, 198
Villars, duc de, 201
Villeroy, maréchal de, 29, 71, 72, 120, 198, 231
Villeroy, maréchale de, 120, 121
Villette, marquise de, 195, 196, 198

Webenheim, Colonel, 271
Wendt, von (Madame's page), 260
William III of England, 64, 65, 265, 317

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